

ROVING RECOLLECTIONS

*The amusing
experiences of a
rolling stone* ➤

RASIL TOZER

Roving Recollections
(*Recollections of a Rolling Stone*)

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ETC.

Roving Recollections

(RECOLLECTIONS OF A ROLLING STONE)

BY

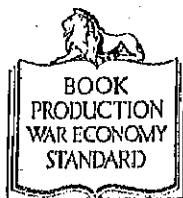
BASIL TOZER

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

YOU PROBABLY know the old saying: "When the first generation amasses a fortune the second hoards it and the third squanders it." When Joseph Tasker inherited from his aunt, Countess Tasker, a fortune of approximately £800,000, he set out to see how quickly he could spend it. Yet he was no fool. He rarely gambled, for, as he used to say: "With all the money I have, why should I want more?" Like most of us he had his failings, but his extraordinary generosity was well known—too well known, unfortunately, to the many parasites who pretended to be his friends. *Dum vivimus, vivamus!* which means actually "While we have life let's enjoy life!" might truly have been his motto, for how thoroughly he lived up to that aphorism is set down in the following pages. *The Daily Telegraph* referred to him once as "a remarkable human document."

B. J. T.

Part I

CHAPTER ONE

I don't think it is a good thing to be brought up to shoot rabbits and hunt foxes and catch trout. That is if in the years to come you will have to earn your livelihood.

Yet that was what my dear old father and my adoring mother did for me—I was brought up to be a country gentleman when there was no country gentleman's career to look forward to.

"Enjoy yourself while you are young," my mother used to say. "It is the only time you really can."

"Lazy rascal," my father used to say. "He'll never do a stroke of work until I'm dead!"

Still, a mother's advice is generally sound—so it is said.

I followed it.

On my tenth birthday my father gave me my first gun.

On my fifteenth birthday I rode my first steeplechase.

Two of the happiest days in my whole life. And how one enjoyed life at that age! My mother was right.

She died before my twentieth birthday. A wonderful woman who through life had never thought ill of anyone, who saw the good in everybody and tried to make excuses for the bad. All the poor in my native town, Teignmouth, loved her. Eccentric, too, but in the right direction. One of her hobbies was the reclaiming of dipsomaniacs, or attempting to reclaim them. And generous. She used at one time to collect all the copper coins which had come into the house during the week, and on Saturday afternoons distribute them amongst the poor. Another of her eccentricities was that every tramp calling at the house should be given a shilling and a meal and then sent on his way rejoicing. But the beggars from miles around came to know of that amiable idiosyncrasy, and the practice had to cease. The local journals went into mourning when she died.

My father was a country lawyer. My mother was well-connected. Her people were absurdly proud of their name and family and station. For a daughter of the house of Llanarth to marry "an obscure country attorney," as they put it—kind friends told me all this in after years—was in those days deemed by people of my mother's rank to be little short of an enormity deserving social ostracism. When my mother became engaged they threatened her, they cajoled her, they did all in their power to prevent her committing such a *mésalliance*. But it was no good. My father and mother were in love when they married, and they remained in love to the day of her death.

"Schooldays—the happiest days of one's life." Who perpetrated that monstrous mis-statement? My parents were R.C.'s, as they say in the Army, and they sent me to Beaumont, the big Jesuit school near Windsor—some call it "the Catholic Eton." But then Stonyhurst, Downside, all the principal Catholic schools used to call themselves "the Catholic Eton."

That was a mistake. I hated the place and the system—we were taught Latin and Greek one day, Greek and Latin the next; Latin and Greek to-morrow, Greek and Latin the day after. Nothing else seemed to matter much—history, geography, mathematics were counted of considerably less importance.*

When I left Beaumont at sixteen to go to another school I new next to nothing about anything that boys ought to know about. The Rector, dear old Father Cassidy, one of the kindest of men, called me up to his room and said, very gently:

"Now tell me, my boy—have you any idea how children come into the world?"

I had more than a vague idea, and that seemed to surprise him. Probably he thought one extraordinarily precocious for knowing so much—at sixteen!

But he proceeded to make other things clear to me, and then with a final warning to be always suspicious of women and their ways and wiles he sent me forth with his blessing.

The chief fault Beaumont suffered from in those days was its snobbery; but that, I am told, is less pronounced now.

*I understand that this is not so now.

Being able as a boy to talk French fluently, I was paired off with a merry, round-faced little fellow who knew no word of English and could talk only French and Spanish. His name was Don Jaime—we used to call him "Jimmy."

Sometimes his father, Don Carlos, would come to spend a day at Beaumont, and on those occasions we were instructed in advance to be on our best behaviour and to wear our best clothes. Don Jaime taught me to smoke cigarettes. I was caught smoking with him and ferruled. Don Jaime was not ferruled.

Among the big boys were the sons of many men at that time well known or distinguished, boys some of whom became well known and distinguished. Justice Day's two sons were there, also the sons of Lord Russell of Killowen, at that time Sir Charles Russell—Charles, Frank and Cyril. Humphrey de Trafford was a big boy then, just leaving Beaumont; Sir Evelyn Wood's sons were there, and so was Teixeira de Mattos. And there were many others who afterwards did well in life.

Prior Park, near Bath, was a much more attractive school—not a Jesuit school, though also R.C. In many ways it contrasted strangely with Beaumont. At Beaumont we had been constantly watched by prefects. At Prior Park we were as free as birds. We could do just as we liked, go where we liked, make what friends we liked, enjoy ourselves in any way we chose. The first way I chose was by going to Bath races and getting robbed of three sovereigns by a card trickster. That taught me a lesson. Never since, though I have been a frequenter of race meetings, have I been "had" in that way or by any other of the many varieties of sharpers who infest racecourses.

Prior Park was a less "classy" school than Beaumont; people used to say "more mixed." Still, the sons of plenty of old Catholic families were there—Chichesters and people like that. A contemporary of my own there was Seymour Hicks. He was an attractive little boy, full of life, good-looking and very clever. I have a photograph of him still, showing him dressed as Buttercup in *Pinafore*. He was excellent in the part, with a wonderful voice. We produced all Gilbert and Sullivan operas at Prior Park—one Edward Fay was the moving spirit

—with some of the boys dressed as girls, a thing of which many parents and some of the more captious of the visitors disapproved.

It was at Prior Park that for the first and only time in my life I found all the Greek that had been crammed into me at Beaumont of use. It enabled me to be cast for the rôle of clown in a Greek play, the audience consisting almost entirely of mothers and sisters of the boys, enthusiasts not one of whom, I am sure, knew a word of Greek. In the back seats sat dozens of brawny quarrymen from the Bath stone quarries near by, without collars and with bits of string tied round their trousers under their knees, and bottles of beer sticking out of their pockets. They all enjoyed it, especially when a lot of the boys in the play had to rush at a lot of the boys dressed as girls and embrace them violently. The mothers of the boys didn't quite like that, but the quarrymen stamped on the floor and slapped their big hands together and let off tremendous guffaws. It was the only part of the play they could really understand. And it appealed to their primitive instincts.

Doctor Williams, then head of Prior Park, was one of the finest Greek scholars in England, so that if any boy made a false quantity he generally had reason to remember it. A newly arrived youth for calling "Xenophon's Anabasis" "Xenophon's Anabasis" was privately whipped!

Then came the question of making a start in life. A brother mine was doing a lot of steeplechasing, and the idea occurred to me that to take up 'chasing professionally might be a profitable career with just enough excitement to make it interesting. But at the suggestion my father reared up. He wanted me to become a lawyer, and reminded me that lawyers were looked at askance by some, while even professional jockeys were not regarded by all with the respect they deserved. Consequently to combine two such rascally professions. . . .

But then my father was not a sportsman. I think he had to work too hard to keep his extravagant family supplied with the luxuries they clamoured for to have time to indulge in any branch of sport himself. He certainly worked hard enough and was self-denying and unselfish enough to deprive himself of anything and everything—had so drastic a step become

necessary—in order that we might have all we needed, or rather, wanted—two different things. For I had two brothers and three sisters—in those unregenerate days a man could have a family of six, even of seven or eight, and yet not be looked upon as a freak, or as one who has lost caste. To-day you mustn't do that sort of thing unless you are a parson, or live in a two-roomed tenement. My eldest brother, too, was giving the old man some trouble. A lieutenant in the Fifth (Northumberland) Fusiliers, he was rather an egregious person. He had a playful habit of missing the last train from Waterloo and driving down to Aldershot in a hansom—a distance of thirty-six miles—arriving in the morning just in time for parade. Once, for a bet of £100, he ate a wineglass. It took him some months to get through it, but he was none the worse. After leaving the army he became a rover. For a while he hustled trunks at a railway station in Pennsylvania. Then he signed on as gardener to an old lady in Sydney, New South Wales; he used to garden all day, then change into evening clothes and dine with her. He thought she would leave him her fortune. But she didn't. She left him a "Ruff's Guide to the Turf"—and a prayer book.

Then some friends told me how a fortune could be made by growing oranges in Florida. When asked what one would have to do to live while the oranges were growing, their reply was, "grow cabbages." I was not particularly interested in either oranges or cabbages, but I was obsessed by a great love of sport and an almost mad infatuation for the sport of shooting, and I knew that in parts of Florida, not necessarily the parts where the oranges and cabbages grew, snipe were to be found in their thousands. And the idea of spending all day and every day in walking up snipe struck me as being decidedly alluring.

But again the old man rebelled. He said he didn't believe in the orange-and-cabbage-growing enterprise, especially as any embarking on it would mean the payment of a big premium to its promoters, which, of course, he would have to find.

My friends told me my father was a fool. I didn't agree with them, though I felt convinced he must be mistaken.

Finally the three fortune-seekers in the orange-and-cabbage growing syndicate started off without me. In less than two years they were back in England, ruined. They had discovered the whole thing to have been a ramp from the start.

I decided that my father was not a fool.

Then engineering struck me as being a pleasant sort of occupation, and my father paid for me to put in a year at the Crystal Palace School of Engineering, at that time located in the south tower of the Palace and presided over by the famous engineer, Mr. Wilson, who had constructed among other things the pier at my native town, Teignmouth.

All sorts and conditions of men were studying engineering at the Crystal Palace, men of every class and every age. It was a delightful year, but I learnt no engineering. Not through the fault of Mr. Wilson or his staff, I don't think any of us learnt much, but we were very happy. And, of course, many were young enough, while others were old enough, to be exceedingly susceptible, so that there was keen competition when our engineering tasks included the installation of electricity for the outdoor ballet in the Palace grounds.

At one time the whole school fell in love *en bloc* with a beautiful, in every sense, trapeze artist who used to perform her hair-raising evolutions thrice daily in the roof of the centre transept. Alcide Capitaine was her name; I can see her lissom figure still turning somersaults many feet up with no net or other safeguard to prevent her sudden death in the event of a false twist. But she was false herself; one day she jilted us all by finishing her contract and going off on tour, no doubt to bruise hearts made of even sterner stuff than ours.

Yes, all those engineers, or alleged engineers, were amazingly amorous by nature. I had never before suspected that engineers could be so amorous. One of them became so appallingly enamoured of an attendant in a shooting gallery that, being turned, he tried to end his life by forcing his head through the iron trellis-work of the face of the enormous clock at the end of the centre transept, so that as the great iron minute hand, which weighed a ton, descended, so would his life be slowly squeezed out, and he finally decapitated.

a But his shrieks when he saw the hand coming down on to his throat, like the pendulum of Allan Poe's story, led to his being rescued just in time, though unconscious when pulled out.

Walter Clifford, younger son of the then Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, was at the Palace engineering school at that time—a curious boy who, when the sun began to blister his skin, used to soak a great skein of waste in lubricating oil and then wind it round his neck, so that nobody with any sense of smell could go within yards of him.

He was one of the hardest workers I ever knew; he was in the Colonial Section, and eventually went out to Canada and built with his own hands a shack on a grant of cleared Government land sixty miles from Winnipeg, the nearest town. For some years he lived quite alone in that shack. Then the Canadian Pacific Railway came along, and the value of his land increased enormously.

Gradually a town called Austin grew up around him, and to-day he is a rich man—he dropped the "Honble." long ago. He owns a great store, "Clifford's Stores"; he runs a bank; he is postmaster; and he has an interest in practically every commercial enterprise in that now flourishing city.

I went to see him some years ago when in Winnipeg. He was just the same—just as hard-working, just as eccentric, just as "good a sort." Some of the townspeople joked about him and made fun of his eccentricities, but they all liked him—"a white man" they called him.

His brother, William, a successful sheep-farmer in New Zealand, inherited the title of Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, and returned from New Zealand to the family seat, Ugbrooke Park, near Newton Abbot.

A queer character, more eccentric than Walter Clifford, obsessed by all sorts of strange but harmless ideas about the Universe and what the world will look like aons of years hence—the founder of, among other things, a new religion. Or perhaps I misjudge him. He may have been a genius. One never knows.

But before the end of the spite of the many attraction:

offer, and my father having pointed out what a nice, career lay in store if only one would adopt the law, "take up seriously, my boy," I decided to follow parental advice and cram to become a solicitor, and some day a partner in the firm.

CHAPTER TWO

To cram meant going to a crammer's, and the crammer selected was an old R.C. *padre* from Potsdam who, a short time before, had arrived mysteriously from the Continent and opened an establishment at Mottingham House, in Mottingham village, which is near Eltham. He professed himself ready to cram anybody for anything, from the Oxford Local to the Matric or Classical Tripos.

An inducement he offered to parents to send their sons to him was that he had been private tutor to German Princes and German Barons and all sorts of *Hochwohlgeborene* people of that sort. And so the parents and guardians of a number of carefully brought-up young men in need of cramming—the brains of many of them being apparently to some extent atrophied—taking him at the face value he set upon himself, placed their sons and wards in his charge.

His name was Reverend Baron von Orsbach—of course we called him "Horseback." He and a housekeeper who had come with him from Potsdam ran the establishment and pocketed big fees.

Personally I always had suspicions about the old Baron, and several among us did not entirely believe some of the stories he used to tell us regarding the remarkable things he claimed to have done. Added to that, the Roman Catholic clergy generally smiled enigmatically, or shrugged their shoulders, if one spoke to them about the Reverend Baron. There was, in short, an odd "atmosphere" surrounding him.

Yet he certainly attracted to Mottingham the class of young men to whom his stories of grandeur in Heidelberg, Dresden,

Düsseldorf, Berlin and Potsdam were intended to appeal. Granard was there, later to become Lord Granard; Kenna, whose brother won the V.C.; Stourton, later to become my Lord Mowbray and Stourton—"the silent nobleman," as they called him in the neighbourhood of Knaresborough; Sir Henry X, whose one accomplishment was that he could pull all his fingers out of joint and then with a single shake jerk them all into joint again; and an amiable youth whose arms would not support his body, so that if hooked by his hands on to the horizontal bar he would drop in a heap on to the floor—we all envied that lad, because on the crown of his head was a cup-shaped recess in which he could balance a billiard-ball. Wonderful, indeed, are Nature's compensations!

Codrington, Keegan, Edmund Stoner, Everard Digby-Boycott, John O'Shea, are others whose names occur to me, and then there was Elliot, who used to wrestle daily with an enormous dumb-bell which nobody else could even lift: one day it overbalanced him backwards and crashed on to his washstand, shattering jug and basin. But those hours he spent daily at Mottingham in wrestling were not wasted, for though he didn't cram his brain he crammed his muscles and eventually developed into the famous professional strong man "showing nightly" at the London Pavilion—perhaps you remember him, "The Biceps King." He had an ardent admirer and imitator in one, Spencer, son of the inventor of some Baby Food, and later Spencer became indentured to Sandow, the then famous professional strong man, and eventually his right-hand man.

Yet another of Von Orsbach's young men was Joseph Tasker, in those days grudgingly allowed five shillings a week by way of pocket-money by an unwise aunt, all the time knowing that in a year or two he would inherit an enormous fortune.

Of course we all needed pocket-money, yet, for one reason or another, were all kept short of it. As a result, every Saturday afternoon the "young gentlemen from the crammer's," as we were called by the Mottingham aborigines, would move off *en masse* to Lee Green, there to interview the local pawnbroker and deposit in his safe keeping parcels of shirts, lesson books

mathematical instruments, dentists' gold plates—anything at all on which a few shillings could be borrowed to enable the “young gentlemen” temporarily to combat financial embarrassment.

And that used seriously to annoy the Baron, whose temper could be violent. For were it to become known that his *protégé*, patronized pawnbrokers—well, the fair name of his establishment would be sullied, and the place might even come to be condemned by those scions of the old *noblesse* whom he was so anxious to placate.

Joseph Tasker, however, had a much more lordly plan for getting pocket-money. Of what use were a few shillings to him, he used to say? So when needing prompt cash he would pop up to town, order half a dozen suits, accept cash in lieu of clothes and get the bill sent to his aunt.

“Not my fault,” he would say, “if I have to do this sort of thing. Blame that ruddy old aunt of mine!”

Another member of the happy family, whom I have forgotten to mention, was Philip Clement Scott, son of Clement Scott, at that time the famous dramatic critic of the *London Daily Telegraph*. “Tiny” Scott he was nicknamed, being of small stature, but what he lacked in inches he more than made up for in brains. Brains! He was full of them. You could almost hear them grinding in his head. He probably had more brains than the rest of us put together—not that that is high praise, for most of us had none. A fine horseman, too.

One incident I recollect in connection with “Tiny” Scott. “I’d smoke any tobacco, I don’t care what it is,” he had said one day in the billiard room, with the irrepressible bravado of youth.

And somebody remembered it.

Later in the day that somebody wandered in.

“I’ve a pipeful of tobacco here that I bet you won’t smoke,” he said, and he held out to him a pipe ready filled.

“You think not?” Scott replied. He took it, set it going, and smoked the tobacco to the end.

“Haven’t I smoked it, eh?”

“Yes. Know what it was?”

“No. What?”

"Only a few hundred dead flies!"

Scott left the room hurriedly.

Of course Scott did well in life. We all knew he would. Every examination he entered for he passed with ease, and eventually he became the youngest Colonel in the British Army.

How little we suspected then that one day he would be my O., that I should have to salute him and call him "sir"! And Baron von Orsbach, the mystery man from Potsdam. What was he doing here in those days, I wonder?

It was while at Mottingham that I came to know a man—who will call him Z—whose place was near Mottingham. His rivers, though only eight miles from London Bridge, were crammed with pheasants. I shot with him once or twice, though at his shoots there was, I used to think then, too much tiring and drinking. Also the sport was not of the best, in the sense that few of the beats afforded sporting shots. Most of the birds, even in the best beats, came very low, and flew past near the guns that they had to be "plastered." After the pheasant shooting one had been accustomed to in Devonshire and in some other counties where, owing to the hilly nature of the countryside, almost all the birds come high, and where the majority are, or were in those days, wild birds and not hand-reared, the shooting at Z's place was disappointing, though big bags were made.

His friends were very fond of eating. He himself was not. I dined with him on several Sundays, and on each occasion I sat down at one and got up at six—we were not eating all the time, of course. Also his friends, with the exception of Lord Langall, Sir Robert Harvey, and one or two others, were many of them men who hardly knew the difference between a cock pheasant and a hen—they were wonderfully fine shots, nevertheless. Their subjects of conversation, too, were at times tiresome—at least, I found them so. And then those "good stories"! So boring.

Z had several mental kinks. One was a dislike to having men-servants about him. His servants were all women, all dressed in flaming red, and some of them pretty. His love of things red was another peculiarity.

I was still at Mottingham when my friend there already mentioned, Joseph Tasker, inherited his enormous fortune—approximately £800,000, safely invested, also Middleton Hall, near Brentwood. He was a cheery, intelligent, good-looking boy, quite clever in some ways, and blessed—or should it be cursed?—with the keenest sense of humour I have ever known in anyone. He at once left Mottingham, having no further need to cram, or to get cash from his tailor and enter it up as suits. He had wanted to go into the Army, but his aunt, Countess Tasker, wouldn't let him—she said he might be shot. Then he had wanted to go into the Navy, but again his aunt wouldn't let him—she said he might be drowned. So instead he set out to enjoy life as a gentleman of means and leisure, bought a coach and a dozen horses, a 500-ton yacht, and one or two other things. We were to meet again in the years to come under very different conditions.

I scraped through the preliminary law examination, and became articled to my father in Teignmouth.

The time spent in his office was a great time. The amount of work done by the five articled clerks was not excessive, but we felt that by getting about and making lots of acquaintances and friends we were "extending the connection." One of the articled clerks, my brother, was also a qualified gentleman rider, and in addition to steeplechasing, mostly at local meetings, he managed a hunt on two or three days in the week. Another, Haggerston, afterwards Sir Edward Haggerston of Ellingham Hall, Northumberland, was a great carsman and always on the river when not in the office, or rather in the office when not on the river. Next came Herbert Parson, best of good fellows, an all-round athlete, a famous West-country Rigger forward, and an amateur pugilist. Last but not least, came Frank White, to-day a prosperous London lawyer, but at that time mostly engaged in composing comic operas and converting "Blackstone's Commentaries of the Laws of England" and "Chitty on the Law of Torts" and "Fearn on Contingent Remainders" into comic history in Gilbert à Beckett's best style.

Great days. It was no unusual thing to find in the office on a crisp winter's morning one articled clerk in a pink coat and

sted and spurred; another ready to step into an outrigger; other hard at work on pen-and-ink sketches of *villains ardent* and John Doe and Richard Roe; another in plus fours—they were not called “plus fours” in those days—and noting boots, while a couple of sporting dogs lay snoring before the fire, occasionally opening an eye in appeal to their master to side-track legal parchments and be up and doing in the field. And then after lunch the fifth article clerk would “discovered” in football shorts, trying to hide his bare knees under the office desk.

Altogether a very sporting crowd, most of whom have since in their spurs, including one of my father’s clerks, Pedrick, who became a literary agent in London.

Pretty women, too. Teignmouth in those days teemed with them. Some I can see still—Templers; Fitzgerald Butlers; Wals; Marshalls; Shaws; Fawcetts—Beatrice, Blanche and “Ivies” and their clever brothers; Elliots; Dashwoods; Stricklands of Dawlish; Hale-Monros—sisters of the late well-known comedian, Robert Hale, whose birthplace was Teignmouth and whose uncle, “Squire Monro” of Ingsdon, was annoyed at Bob’s becoming a “common, vulgar actor-feller”; pretty Clara Rasch, who afterwards married Horace Newte, the novelist; her beautiful mother; lovely Angela Saunders, now Mrs. Hope, the fashionable antique dealer in Thurloes Place; “Birdie” Barnard; Violet Brine; handsome Mrs. “Jimmy” Morrison; a very live wire, Mrs. Hardy Harris; and many more.

And then one day there arrived in Teignmouth, none knew whence they came, two widows of exceptional loveliness. One was two-and-twenty, the other was just nineteen. They rented a picturesque thatched cottage, called Trafalgar, just outside the town. And they “saw and conquered” anybody ever did!

They lived together alone and appeared to have plenty of money. They gave dances and picnics and midnight river parties. Both were finished horsewomen. Their nine or ten hunters were stabled in the town.

Followed a sudden bull movement in the popularity of fox-hunting amongst Teignmouth’s young men. Some who

never before had been astride a horse appeared at the meet of the South Devon Hounds resplendent in pink and white buttonholes which might have served for either adornment or concealment. Mrs. Sharples, blue-eyed and twenty-two. Mrs. Dixon Deas, brown-eyed and nineteen. How well I remember the heart-burning they caused! Within a fortnight after their arrival the *jeunesse dorée* of the town were all down with heart affection. With the office staff of article clerk the attack assumed serious proportions. Never had the old town been so thoroughly stirred up.

My father hated them—I mean the widows.

Then, to give the town a further fillip, we inaugurated a gun and polo club. Clay pigeons were used, and members of the Torquay gun club, where I had been so fortunate as to win the challenge cup after tying with Boydell Gibson and Sir Thomas Freake, came over in great force. Gibson and Tom Freake were wonderfully fine shots, and I had won the challenge cup by a singular stroke of luck. As for the polo, as none of us had any money to speak of, we persuaded some farmers who owned more or less suitable ponies to job them to us at a pound or two a week. Most of the farmers had never even heard of polo, and at first were reluctant to do what we suggested. They wanted to know what the game was like, and if the ponies could get hurt. But when we explained that polo was to all intents "croquet played on horseback," they consented to listen to reason.

Washington Singer, then Master of the South Devon Hounds, ran a polo club at Paignton, where he and his brothers shared a house called The Wigwam, and our two clubs often met, mostly at Lindridge Park, then owned by Captain Templar.

Washington Singer was, I think, the most popular Master of the South Devon Hunt ever had. Though liberal with his money, he never wasted it. The three brothers were grandsons of Singer of sewing-machine fame, and unlike some rich young men of that period whose fathers had amassed fortunes in trade, were proud of the way their forbears had made their money. Mrs. Washington Singer and Mrs. Paris Singer were equally pretty, and in every way

ther members of the South Devon sporting set at that time were Archie Clark of Paignton; Knox-Gore; Millar; Pitts-Chatto of the Daison, St. Marychurch, who had plenty of money and a pretty wife; Pickering; Colonel Hargreave, whose beautiful wife everybody loved; Engelheart, who was in a coach, and dozens more whose names escape me.

At the end of two years I began to find the law wearisome. Even the prospect of a revolving chair and a seat on a Board of Directors or a partnership in the firm in the far-off future could not, I felt, compensate for the monotony of a life spent for ever in a small country town. When I told my father that I had decided to abandon the law as a career, he was much upset and very angry. But I explained to him that it had to be. He called me a "young fool" and told me to go to—I regret where, exactly. I think he thought that the blue-eyed widow and the brown-eyed widow had between them been my undoing. But he was wrong. And in any case their undoing would not have continued, for they had then left Teignmouth unsearched, no doubt, of fresh fields to conquer.

CHAPTER THREE

I HAD heard of an interesting discovery in a pre-Reformation country house in Yorkshire called Danby Hall, owned for centuries by some cousins of mine named Scrope. Workmen repairing a chimney had come upon a priests' hiding-place, and in it a lot of church plate and church vestments, surberds, helmets, a quantity of horses' harness several centuries old, and other relics of the past. A longing to see these things and the place where they had been found took hold of me, and though I had never met the Scropes I wrote to ask if I could visit Danby.

They wrote back, "Come and stay a week," and I stayed two months—such is the hospitality of North-country folk. They had a grouse-moor, Stainton, and any number of

hunters, while two packs of hounds were within easy reach—the York and Ainsty and the Bedale.

Simon Scrope, the father, was a typical English gentleman of the old *noblesse*, the sort you rarely meet now. Though over seventy, he still fished and hunted and shot, and his daughters and sons worshipped him, although the latter used to call him all sorts of rude names. Fogies who were his contemporaries thought that was very wrong, "lacking in respect," they called it, and occasionally they would tell him so. Whereat old Scrope would answer:

"Oh, don't mind what they call me. They'd do anything in the world for me, those boys of mine, just as I'd do anything in the world for them. They know it. And they know I know it."

And he was right. The Scropes were the most united family it is possible to conceive. To show the sort of man old Simon Scrope was, though passionately fond of hunting, and averse from ever missing a day's hunting if he could help it, one morning, not feeling well, and his doctor having told him that he must on no account leave the house, he decided to stay in bed.

Returning home from hunting, in a bitter north wind and a biting, blinding snowstorm as evening was closing in, I descried a huddled-up figure on horseback coming slowly towards me. When we came up to each other I recognized old Simon.

"Good God!" I exclaimed. "You ought not to be out in this weather, surely!"

He peered at me from under his bushy brows, hardly able to open his eyes owing to the wind and sleet.

"I know," he said hoarsely. "But a poor old woman, wife of one of the cottagers, is dying. She sent word that she would like to see me before she died. Her cottage is only four miles on"—we were five miles from Danby then—"and I can't let her die without seeing me, as she wants to see me."

That was the sort of man old Simon Scrope was.

He had several peculiarities to which his family strongly objected. Sometimes at breakfast he would come into the dining-room with a basket of eggs.

them into the slop-basin to wash the mud off them. Instantly his sons would rear up and call out, "Father, you're a filthy pig!" and let off other abuse. But old Scrope would just chuckle, and as likely as not the next morning he would do the same thing again.

After that first visit I often stayed at Danby—a beautiful old house with historic legends attached to it. The Scropes are among the oldest Catholic families in England.

Two men who hunted with the Bedale in those days I used to look at with a feeling of awe, Scrope having told me that one of them had sold to the other for sixty thousand pounds a woman he had lived with for some years. Yet when the "husbands" met in the hunting-field they were on the best of terms.

For awhile I found the life of drifting from one country-house to another pleasant enough, especially when, as was often the case, there was good shooting and hunting and no need to job horses. In Monmouthshire in particular, where a cousin of mine, Reginald Herbert of Clytha Park, was then Master of the Monmouthshire Hounds, we used to get excellent sport. And yet life under those conditions was not wholly satisfying, and finally I drifted to London and went to look up a man old enough to have been my father, who had always been extremely kind to me—Sir Walter Besant.

He lived at Hampstead at that time, and I stayed with him for awhile. I had felt drawn towards literature and journalism since a book I had written on shooting had been published, and Sir Walter encouraged me. A most interesting man, and extraordinarily sympathetic, he overflowed with philanthropy and true philosophy. Had he been rich the amount of good he would have done would have been prodigious. But he was comparatively poor. Still, he did the best he could. We used to make expeditions into Stepney, and Spitalfields, and Whitechapel and other districts lying east, and he would tell me all sorts of interesting stories about the different streets and their histories and what had happened in them, and show me the wretched conditions under which the people lived. Then he would go on to

explain in his wonderfully incisive way how those conditions ought to be and could be completely changed, how he would change them if he had the money and the power.

Not long before that Besant had written "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," the book which led eventually to the erection and endowment of his visionary Palace of Delight, known to-day as the People's Palace. Indeed, the many hours I spent with him in his cosy smoking-room in his house in Hampstead, absorbing the interesting things he talked about, are among my most pleasant recollections of the past.

He was writing, always writing. Some used to say that he drank to excess; but that was a lie. He detested people who overdrank, and could only with difficulty be induced to remain in the presence of men the worse for drink.

"It is so disgusting," he used to say, "so loathly, so bestial!"

He wrote a powerful little book in which he described with wonderful vividness and accuracy the inward cravings of a hereditary dipsomaniac. Everybody who read "The Demoniac" was enormously impressed by it—the proof-sheets had been revised by a physician who specialized in the treatment of persons obsessed by a craving for liquor. Maybe it was his realistic description of the psychology first of an incipient dipsomaniac and then of a confirmed dipsomaniac which led some to believe that the author himself suffered from the craving. Little did I suspect then how intimately I was in the near future to become associated with an incurable dipsomaniac, or what opportunities I should be afforded of studying those fearful outbreaks which Sir Walter had often pictured to me so graphically.

"Why don't you try journalism?" he said to me one day.

"I have tried so many things," I answered. "And in none have I succeeded. One is born like that. It's Fate."

"Nonsense," he replied. "I shouldn't be surprised if you had the journalistic instinct. And a 'nose for news' too. Have a shot at it. Why not go through a course at J. K.'s school of journalism? I am told that J. K. is a good journalistic coach. He was, for many years, leader-writer on a London daily paper."

I went to see J. K. His school was in the Outer Temple. I was shown a dozen or so young men seated at an oblong table scribbling like creatures possessed. And J. K. wandered round the table giving a word of advice here, stopping there to note some error, or to make some excision from one of his pupils' manuscripts. Then, suddenly, he would call them all to attention, the while he pronounced some grave dictum.

I was immensely impressed. It all seemed very fine, very 'brainy.' I wrote a prodigal-son letter to my father, telling him about J. K. and his school, and suggesting. . . .

He forgave me my past misdeeds. I knew he would. Also he adopted my proposal that he should disburse one hundred guineas to enable me to train in J. K.'s school for a year.

"But this will be the last time," he said.

It was always "the last time"!

J. K. was a fine-looking man, not tall, but with good features, a wonderfully clear skin for a man, and extremely intelligent hazel eyes which, when he talked, betrayed by their twinkling his sense of humour. They twinkled a good deal when I handed him my father's cheque!

Among the pupils whom I had seen scribbling so fast were several who afterwards became famous. J. K. would then point to them and say:

"There, see what my school did! It was my tuition that made' those men!"

One, with a high-pitched voice, son of a parson, was called Robert Hichens. At J. K.'s he wrote two or three stories weekly for a journal called *Mistress and Maid*, issued by the school for 'instructional purposes.' Hichens's stories even then showed his powerful imagination—they appeared three at a time under three different pen names. *Mistress and Maid* was read largely by lodging-house landladies, who must have enjoyed the long Greek and Latin quotations with which its articles were freely interlarded.

Another pupil was Francis Gribble. Another was S. L. Bensusan. Another, David Williamson. Another, Arthur A. Sykes, of Trinity College, Cambridge, who afterwards worked regularly for *Punch*. Another was "George Paston"—yes, J. K. coached women too, in a separate room.

We didn't learn very much there. It was Sykes, I think, who cynically remarked that all J. K. taught us was never begin a leading article with a full stop or end it with the definite article "the." Still, J. K. had seen a lot of the world and knew all about most branches of journalism, and his news ought to be collected, and we all liked him.

"And if you want to study style," he would say, "read my leading articles"—he had them bound up in a big album. There is hardly a subject, I think, on which he had not, at one time or another, written a newspaper article.

One thing J. K. never forgave me. I introduced him to a friend of mine, one of the many "journalistic aspirants" whom I had come to know.

Said this aspirant: "Mr. J. K., I can't pay you a hundred guineas, but I can pay you fifty guineas for a six months' course. Will you take me?"

J. K. demurred then consented, apparently with reluctance. Afterwards, the "aspirant" turned to good account what J. K. had taught him for fifty guineas by retailing it to a circle of minor aspirants for small fees. J. K. was a good deal rattled when he came to hear about that.

The next move was to get posted to the staff of some newspaper. I knew Douglas Sladen—who doesn't know hospitable Sladen and his *confidre*, Burgin?—and to Sladen I turned for advice.

He said: "I have just heard of an opening in France, which might suit you to make a start. A daily paper near Paris, published in English, requires an assistant editor. Your knowledge of French may help you."

I was interviewed and offered three pounds a week and my fare to Paris. I accepted. Mr. X. Y. Z., greatly pleased, suggested our lunching at the Hotel Cecil "to seal the compact." His son joined us at lunch. Then X. Y. Z. found he had forgotten to bring his purse, and his son had forgotten his too, so I had to pay for the lunch, which, as we had done ourselves well in order to make the scaling quite secure, swallowed my first week's salary.

That night I went to France.

The newspaper office consisted of two small rooms—the editorial room and the composing room. It overlooked an evil-smelling street. There was a constant escape of gas, and an open drain into which neighbours used to fling slops in the early morning ran just under the window. The “staff” comprised three persons—a gaunt creature named Harding, a very good sort; a curly-headed boy who spoke Lancashire in the original; and myself. Between us we had to do everything except set up the type. The paper went to press at six in the morning and was published an hour later. We arrived at the office at one in the morning. As Mr. X. Y. Z., who had engaged me, used to say laconically: “So you see you have all the day and half the night in which to amuse yourself.”

There was little to be done until about 2 a.m., when small boys would come hurrying in with all that day’s French papers wet from the press—the *Figaro*, the *Matin* and the rest. At once we would pounce on them—the papers, not the boys—and proceed to skim their contents at top-speed, blue-pencilling any news items likely to be of interest to British readers. Then we turned all the items into English, and put headings to them—“From a Special Correspondent in Naples;” “By Special Cable from New York;” “By Special Cable from New Orleans,” or from San Francisco, or from Hong Kong, or Peking, or Jerusalem, or Jericho or any old place the news happened to relate to.

At three in the morning the telephone would ring and a voice would say—“London speaking.” Then the voice would record late news from England—describe what the crowds on the river banks that afternoon had looked like while the boat-race was being rowed; what this or that Cabinet Minister would probably say next day; give Stock Exchange closing prices (of course received in France long before by wire) and so on.

That “long-distance telephone call” lasted ten minutes and was paid for at the rate of several shillings a minute. It “came through” every night for months. Then the discovery was made that this “late news” came really not from London but from a neighbouring town!

Then all the copy, including "News by telephone from London as we go to press," "telegraphic" and "cabled" messages from our "special correspondents" in every quarter of the world, would be sent into the composing room, whence shouts of laughter would presently issue as the compositors—all compositors appear to be cursed with an impish sense of humour—came upon some super-grotesque bit of news supposed to have been received from the other side of the world.

Tiresome people, those compositors. They loved setting up paragraphs, when an opportunity of doing so occurred, in such a way that no decent-minded person would have dared read the sentence aloud—a word intentionally transposed or mis-spelt would often produce that result. And then when we noticed these booby traps and sent back the proofs corrected, the compositors' merriment would be renewed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE awful night was when we unwittingly charged a French citizen with wilful murder.

The paper had been published only an hour or two when an infuriated individual with great black eyes and a huge black moustache hurled himself into the office breathing fire and brimstone and demanding in a voice of thunder to see the Editor—"le rédacteur-en-chef!"

I had gone back to fetch something and so received the full shock of the outraged citizen's fury. Flourishing a copy of the paper above his head, shouting and gesticulating, he wore by the Virgin Mary and all the saints that he would horsewhip the Editor then and there, strangle him, break very bone in his *sacré corps!*

I felt that the safety of the universe rested with me during those moments. This man must be calmed regardless of expense. He wouldn't let me speak at first, but gradually he cooled down a little and I jumped into the breach and offered him a cigarette.

The effect was magical. His fury sank at least ten points. And at last he began to attend to what for ten minutes I had been trying to tell him—that the whole thing had been a mistake, a dreadful, a most regrettable and unpardonable blunder. I took pen and paper and in front of him wrote out the most abject and servile apology that, I am sure, has ever been written by anybody, and I gave him my word, “the word of an Englishman,” that the apology should appear in war type on the front page next day, with a couple of scare headlines to give it additional emphasis.

At the end of half an hour I had him feeding out of my hand. He actually called me a *bon garçon* and suggested that I should share an *apéritif* with him in the *estaminet* hard by, beyond the open drain. Then I retaliated by inviting him to lunch, and before parting we metaphorically fell on each other's necks.

But it had been a near thing. And I believe to this day that he did poison that nephew of his in order to inherit his fortune.

Some months after joining the “staff” I had occasion to call to interview Sir Edward Blount in Paris. He was then Chairman of the Chemin de fer de l'Ouest. I found him a delightful old man—very unlike some of the people one has had to interview for newspapers—kind and courteous and only too glad to help in any way he could in supplying the information we wanted. He ended by asking me to come and see him again “if ever you happen to be passing,” and I took care to happen to be passing very soon afterwards. Then once or twice he invited me to dine, and one day he told me that if at any time I wanted to run over to London for any purpose he would be pleased to give me free passes on rail and boat.

And he proved to be as good as his word.

I lived mostly in Paris and had begun by masquerading as a gentleman by staying at the Hotel Brighton in the Rue de Rivoli, next door to the Meurice. A well-appointed little hotel, its tariff was too high to justify my remaining there but the proprietor, one Bastianello, had such a pretty

daughter that I contrived to live above my station for quite a long time.

And out of evil came good, for one day who should arrive there and engage a suite of rooms for an indefinite period but Samuel Clemens ("Mark Twain") and his wife and daughter. I soon made Mark Twain's acquaintance and he proved to be a most interesting companion. He never laughed and only rarely smiled, but when anything amused him his eyes set far back in his head and shaded by thick, bushy eyebrows, would betray his sense of humour.

We grew to be great friends after a while, but when once or twice I hinted that I should like to meet Mrs. Clemens and his daughter, he changed the subject. So one day I tackled him.

"Mark," I said, "I should like to know Mrs. Clemens. Why don't you introduce me? I know you have some reason for not introducing me. Tell me, what is it?"

At once the little eyes began to sparkle.

"Well, as you ask me like that," he answered, "I'll tell you. Mrs. Clemens sees you coming back to the hotel morning after morning between seven and eight o'clock wearing a tuxedo (dinner jacket), and she doesn't like it. At least she says she won't know a young man who has habits of that sort. I have suggested introducing you, please don't think I haven't."

"But habits of what sort?" I exclaimed.

"Why, staying out all night is one of them. Of course I know the reason is that after going to theatres and dances and places you go direct to your office, and then when your work on the paper is finished you come straight back to the hotel. I know all that. But whenever I try to explain the circumstances to Mrs. Clemens she looks at me down her nose, shakes a finger at me, and says:

"'Oh, yes, Mark. I have had stories of that kind before from you. And I have met night friends of that sort before—of yours. No, I won't have him introduced. If you do introduce him I won't speak to him.'"

And so I never came to know either Mrs. Clemens or her daughter—the latter had a beautiful voice and was a

without knowing it, to sing me to sleep in the morning, for my room was just over Mark Twain's suite.

Israel Zangwill paid his first visit to Paris while I was living here, and asked me to present him to Mark Twain. I did, but for some reason Mark Twain never took to Zangwill. "Of course," he said to me, "I know all about him, and how clever he is, but I don't take to him. He must not blame me. I should not blame him if he didn't take to me. It is merely that we happen not to be in sympathy."

Mark Twain was an extraordinarily kind man, devoted to dumb animals and a hater of every form of cruelty. An idealist, too, in his way—a visionary. The one thing he couldn't bear was to hear a child cry. Also he was singularly sensitive regarding what people thought about him. On one occasion he gave at the British Embassy a reading of extracts from his works, in aid of some charity. The price of admission was a louis, and the hall was crowded with American and British aristocracy resident in Paris. When the reading, which was extremely well received, was over, I met Mark coming slowly and pensively along the pavement in the Rue de Rivoli, and when we had talked for a few minutes and I had congratulated him on the afternoon's success, I noticed that he seemed to be subdued.

"What is it, Mark?" I said. "You look depressed."

He stopped in his walk and fixed his gaze on mine.

"I am depressed," he said. "After reading for an hour and getting a lot of money for that charity, the only criticism I overheard as I was coming out with the crowd was:

"What a beastly American accent that man has!"

He hated allusion being made to his accent.

But after six months or so I decided to tear myself away from the Hotel Brighton and the bright-eyed daughter—the good burgomaster. Also everybody one met in the part of Paris seemed to be either British or American, arriving by that time got to know my way about Paris pretty well, I went to live in the Quartier Montmartre in an artist's studio in a street off Clichy.

The "atmosphere" of Montmartre was much more to my liking, and the little colony of artistic Bohemians was worth

mixing with—they had so much to talk about and were interested in so many things. Indeed, though since then I have travelled in many countries I have never found a city which "grew" on one as Paris did, with its historic associations and its romantic memories: many men and women who have lived in Paris and afterwards travelled tell me that that is their experience as well. The lovely and beautifully-dressed women, too, were at all times food for tired eyes. Strange that while Parisiennes are so exceptionally attractive, the women of the provinces are mostly commonplace and colourless.

Suddenly our journal began to stop payment of salaries. As the stoppage seemed likely to continue, I resigned my post with its three pounds a week. "Our Mr. Harding" also resigned—and went to America.

Money was scarce, as usual, and I could see no way of earning any in Paris except by backing horses. That I had just enough intelligence not to do, and one evening in the lounge of the Hotel Continental I met a man whom I had known very slightly in London—I had met him when pigeon-shooting at the Gun Club, Notting Hill.

His name was Berasford—*not* Beresford. We dined together, and afterwards he gave me letters of introduction to friends of his—one to Hugh Drummond, whom everybody called "Hughie," the other to a man named Lloyd.

He said I should find them "my sort."

I did.

Before I had known them long—I was back in London again—they suggested putting up a sum of money to "run me" as a professional pigeon-shooter. They said there was money to be made that way, and in confirmation spoke of a man named Pede, whom I knew to be earning a by-no-means precarious livelihood by shooting pigeons professionally for a small capitalist. I was to have my living and incidental and travelling expenses paid and to receive a proportion of all sums won. Thus if I won nothing I should earn nothing, but I should not be out of pocket. I was to shoot under an assumed name.

It seemed a fair proposition, and we started operations.

the Welsh Harp, Hendon. I was given a generous handi-cap, which resulted in a win of £128 on the first day and £120 on the second day. My backers won money in addition by backing the gun.

That was not a bad start, and The Syndicate, as we called ourselves, went on to Nunhead and then to other places on the outskirts of London where trap-shooting meetings were held, and afterwards made a tour of the provinces. In addition Drummond arranged for me to shoot private matches. Fortune continued to shine on us for awhile. Then one day we were badly "had."

The match was for £100, to kill forty-five out of fifty pigeons at twenty-eight yards' rise. At the outset all went well, and twenty-four birds had been accounted for, when my gun missed fire. A fresh cartridge was allowed, but presently there came another miss-fire, which was followed by another, and then by another.

The referee thereupon began to grow restive. The cartridges which had missed fire were, on being cut open, found to contain shot, but instead of powder there was sawdust. Several of my cartridges waiting to be used proved to have been similarly doctored, and the referee declaring—quite irregularly—that every shooter must be held to be responsible for the proper or improper loading of his cartridges, declared me to be loser.

That and other things disgusted me with professional pigeon-shooting, and I gave it up after shooting once or twice at Monte Carlo and doing badly; the boundary at Monte in front of the traps being only eighteen yards—or metres, I forget which—makes the shooting there exceedingly difficult. Straight away birds have to be killed the moment they leave the traps, or they are over the boundary, even though just outside it they may drop dead.

The Syndicate lost money at Monte, though it might have done worse, for the best shots in the world compete there, or rather used to—men like Baron Dorlodot, Baron de Pallandt, Harding Cox, Roberts, Captain Leighton—who always seemed to struggle with his gun during the preliminary mounting before calling "Pull!" but was none the less a splendid trap-shot—Heygate, Monsieur Journu and others

Somehow at Monte I could never shoot well. Probably the night life was not conducive to good marksmanship. Certainly Berasford and Drummond and Lloyd, for whose money I was responsible, were very considerate, for they never complained. True, they had made over £800 net in England in about a month, but at Monte they dropped considerably over that amount in less than three weeks. All said and done, however, pigeon shooting is a cold-blooded amusement and called sport.

CHAPTER FIVE

WE were thinking of leaving Monte Carlo, when one evening at our hotel we got into conversation with an intelligent little man who afterwards turned out to be Alfred Calmour, author of a successful play called *The Amber Heart*.

Many of the people with whom one becomes acquainted in Monte begin almost at once to talk about baccara and roulette systems and "infallible" methods of beating the tables.

Alfred Calmour—we were then still unaware of his identity—soon broached this subject, and presently became so enthusiastic that when, later, he suggested our going up with him to his hotel room in order that he might illustrate his theory in practice with a small roulette which he said he had there, we fell in with the proposition.

I can see that room still—Hughie Drummond stretched out on Calmour's bed, with a big cigar in his mouth; Lloyd bending over Calmour seated at a table with his roulette and the Pair and Impair cloth in front of him, and with long slips of paper with pins stuck in them, and a pot of red ink on one side and a pot of black ink on the other.

How he talked! My God, how Calmour talked! I had never before and have never since heard anything like it. He talked for nearly three hours without a break, except when he paused for a moment to work out on paper some

If in black ink and half in red—figures, all figures, columns and columns of them.

Round and round the roulette spun, with Calmour calling, each time it stopped: "*Le numéro douze gagne! Le noir!*" or "*Le numéro sept gagne! Le rouge!*" Out came the little ball, down went more black and red figures on the slips of paper, Calmour becoming all the time more and more excited and gradually hypnotizing us into believing what he himself did implicitly believe—that a fortune could be won for himself and for ourselves if only he could find a backer to put up the necessary capital.

And before we left that room he had found a backer.

The Syndicate!

Hughie and Lloyd agreed to put up £800 apiece. I said I would risk £100—about all I had in the world at the moment.

Calmour was delighted—beside himself. He rang for a bottle of Heidsieck's Dry Monopole, at that time considered to be "the only champagne fit for a gentleman's consumption"—at least so Calmour said—and we drank success with a capital S to the new enterprise. Already we saw ourselves living in opulence on our to-be-easily-earned winnings at the tables.

We began operations the following night. The system worked splendidly—almost every roulette system does at first. By the time we had finished we were over £2,000 to the good. We slapped Calmour on the back, called him a "stout fellow," "wished we had met him years ago," and felt that at last we had discovered what the Almighty had sent us into the world for. He had sent us to Teach Erring Mankind how to Win at Roulette.

The next night we did better still—far more remunerative than pigeon-shooting, we agreed. The third night we did better again. People began to talk. They tried to find out the secret of our play, how we managed to be so successful, what our system was. But Calmour was like an oyster—so unlike the talking Calmour of the first night we had met. He would say nothing at all.

By the end of the week we were all in the highest of spirits.

If we stuck to Calmour's system apparently nothing could go wrong.

But something did go wrong.

It began to go wrong ten days after we had started operations. We began to lose. We lost and we lost. Calmour was frantic. But it was not the system's fault, he declared. The system *couldn't* fail. Someone had blundered. *W*'s were at fault.

Back in his room he proved to us in columns of red and black figures on those long slips of paper, where we had failed—where "the initial blunder," as he called it, had been made. We pretended we understood. But the next night we still lost. In a little under three weeks from the day we had toasted Success to one another we had just enough money to pay our bills at the hotel and our fares back to England.

After that I lost sight of Drummond and Lloyd for awhile, but Calmour, who lived in a top-floor room in Sydney Street, Chelsea, and never got up until lunch-time because he said "breakfast was so expensive," I was for ever meeting. And whenever I met him it was impossible to escape from him under an hour, during the whole of which time he would talk about roulette and roulette systems and "*en pleins*" until I began to feel that I was seeing things on the walls—great big red numerals, and black numerals, hundreds of them, thousands of them, millions, and that wretched little ball ever rattling in my ears!

People were very kind and hospitable years ago. I suppose they are still, but one seems to notice it less. As an instance of what I mean, I had been staying for a week's pheasant-shoot at a place called Exton, in Rutland—at that time the home of Lady Norah Bentinck, a cousin of Captain Noel of the Everest expedition. Never having hunted in that country, I decided to put in a day with the Cottessmore when the shoot was over, and therefore telegraphed to a job-master in Oakham to send a horse to meet me at the railway station on the morning of the meet.

But on my arrival at the station there was no horse, and whilst making inquiries I saw a dog-cart coming rapidly along, driven by a man with a top-hat crammed with

of his head. He pulled up in the station yard and jumped on, so, seeing that he was in hunting-kit, I asked if he knew any place near where I could job a mount, mine not having tied up.

Impossible at such short notice," he answered. "Jump on my trap, if you like, and I'll drive you to the meet." The meet was eight miles off, and before we got there he had suggested to me that I should ride his second horse: an amazing proposal, for who not mentally deranged would offer a total stranger a mount on a valuable animal? This I ventured point out to him, whereat he laughed and said that he would "take a sporting chance."

When hounds had finished drawing for the day he insisted my going home with him—he had a nice place where he had with his sister, I forget the name of it, but remember that enormous mechanical orchestrion was being unpacked and up in the hall. He was obsessed by a passion for music, I think, for on our way home in torrents of rain he had insisted

our pulling up outside a village church where organ practice was in progress, and there we had sat on our horses for twenty minutes listening to the organ, while rain came down in sheets. Had the music not stopped then he would probably have waited until it did stop.

He made me stay and dine, lent me clothes, and later lent me pyjamas and made me stay the night, while next morning he sent me to the station in his dog-cart. Wonderful hospitality in a total stranger! His name I had discovered was Arthur Ernest Brocklehurst, a character in Rutland as I afterwards learned.

Curious how in those old days one tumbled across people. At a dinner of the Society of Authors I found myself seated beside a rather extraordinary young man—extraordinary, that is to say, in appearance. He had a very long head, a saturnine smile, and talked in a peculiar way. I soon found that though he looked rather odd he was no fool, and we had become so friendly by the end of dinner that later I proposed his coming back to my rooms with me for a night-cap and a final smoke—I had rooms in Pall Mall, facing the Carlton Hotel.

We got there at midnight. Two hours later, as he still made no move to go, I hinted pretty plainly that I meant to go to bed.

But instead of taking the hint, he produced from his pocket a handful of long cigars sealed up in glass tubes.

"When you've smoked those I'll go, and not before," he said with a laugh.

And so we sat there talking about all sorts of things until seven o'clock in the morning.

"You seem to be fond of shooting," he said, at last rising to go. "I've a little shoot in Sussex. Come down on Monday and shoot. By the way, you've not told me your name."

Then he told me that his name was Clifford Borrer, and that "though a gentleman by birth he hoped to become an author by profession."

Concluding that he probably lived in a cottage and rented an acre or two of rough shooting, where we might get half-a-dozen rabbits and perhaps a brace of partridges, I accepted.

The address he had left with me was Pickwell, Cuckfield, Sussex, and on arriving at the station on the Monday evening I was taken aback at being met by a smart brougham and pair, with men in livery and all the rest. I was more astonished still when the brougham drove in past a lodge and up an avenue and then arrived at quite a big house. I breathed a prayer of thanks for having, as an afterthought, brought a dinner jacket.

Only then did I discover Clifford Borrer to be a rich bachelor living at Pickwell with his mother, and heir to the Pickwell estate.

Three other guns had already arrived; one was a man called Washington Hibbert; another was called Sartoris; the name of the third I forget.

After breakfast next morning there arrived from London a sixth gun.

"I know nothing about this extra gun," Borrer confided to me. "Met him for the first time yesterday—in the City." Picked him up just as I picked you up.

Before we had been shooting half an hour it became obvious that "the City gentleman," as we nicknamed him, had done

little shooting previously, if any. It was a cover shoot, and every time a bird rose he went almost off his head with excitement, loosing off his gun in the wildest way. Before lunch he hit two beaters; but when he had expressed his regret to them they wore such broad grins that we knew "the City gentleman" must have compensated them liberally.

Apart from that all went well until the afternoon, when we lined up in a ride for a beat where the birds would, we saw, come low, in fact so low that they would be about on a level with our heads when crossing. The City gentleman was on my right, and I decided to keep an eye on him. On my left was Washington Hibbert. Beyond Hibbert was the gun whose name I can't remember.

Suddenly I saw a pheasant coming. It would in a moment, I saw, cross the ride between the City gentleman and myself. The City gentleman saw it too, and began to flourish his gun. Its muzzle swung towards me—I caught a brief glimpse of barrels aiming straight at my head—I dropped flat—Bang! ...

He had fired both barrels at once.

The charges hit Hibbert in the face, hit also the gun beyond him. For the next few minutes the air quivered with some of the most horrible expletives I have ever heard in my life! Hibbert's face fortunately swelled so quickly that he was soon reduced to silence. The City gentleman apologized, yet had the effrontery to go on shooting. Our host, however, kept him at heel after that, and when we got home in the evening he told his mother a cock-and-bull story of Hibbert's having slipped off a bank and struck his face on the stump of a tree.

A good fellow, Hibbert, and a keen sportsman. Like the rest of us he was hard up in those days. Afterwards he married a charming and lovely girl, a daughter of Sir William Nelson, the meat magnate and shipowner and racehorse owner, who later died leaving just under a million.

Poor Borrer had bad luck. He married soon afterwards, and I was told that shortly after that he and his wife separated. Then his mother remarried, which cut him out of Pickwe and the fortune he had expected to inherit.

CHAPTER SIX

By that time I was doing fairly well as a free-lance writer; least if earning ten or twelve pounds a week by dint of very hard work and by being ever on the move in search of new can be described as "doing well." And it was while so employed that at Lingfield races I became acquainted with a little group of professional backers of horses. On our way back to town this "firm" invited me to dine with them that night at Challis's Hotel in Rupert Street, then a favourite rendezvous of bookmakers and of private detectives. Before the evening was out they suggested my joining them for a few weeks—they probably thought I had money and that they would induce me to invest some in their "firm."

I went with them first to Newmarket, and at the Coronation Hotel, where we stayed, I heard more scandal about some owners of thoroughbreds and their wives and mistresses as well as about matters connected with the Turf than I had ever heard before. I had meant to follow slavishly the advice of my new-found friends—that is to say, to back horses only when they backed them and then to back them for as much as I could afford. But during the first two days they did not make a bet, which was boring. On the third day they backed only one animal, but backed it heavily.

On their advice I backed it too, and it romped in after starting at even money. From Newmarket we went to Derby, thence to Nottingham, Edinburgh, Leicester, Birmingham, Newcastle and other meetings, including Ripon.

I had never before realized what a lot of people travel from meeting to meeting, backing horses—I don't mean bookmakers, of course, who lay the odds. Two old ladies in particular interested me. One saw them everywhere. Sisters apparently, they generally limited their stake to ten shillings, and I never saw either of them back a horse for more than two pounds. I believe those two old ladies enjoyed life thoroughly, and I am sure they got more pleasure and excitement out of it than the many old ladies do who, with small private means, sit at home and speculate on the Stock Exchange.

My little group of professional backers seemed to do very well; one of them told me that his father had been a professional backer all his life, and his grandfather before him. They had one rule from which they never under any circumstances departed; they never backed an animal at odds on. But I found that there was little amusement and less excitement in backing horses and not backing them in that systematic sort of way—at three of the meetings we had attended in succession the “firm” had not made a single bet. So instead of continuing to follow the “firm’s” advice, which would have resulted in a substantial profit by the end of the month, I began to back my own fancies—and lost. After the Ripon meeting I bade the “firm” farewell.

The little tour had been pleasant enough, however, and had given me an insight into a side of life of which until then I had known nothing. Also it eventually provided me with a good deal of material for newspaper copy, and food for thought as well.

Life was different in those days, of course. Women were beginning to ride push-bicycles, and “leaders of Society” had taken to bicycling in the early morning in Battersea Park and then having breakfast there. Then the usual crowd of nobodies who from time immemorial have aped the ways of what used to be called the “smart set” began to throng Battersea Park in the early morning too, and in a little while the “leaders of society” gave up going there.

There was strong opposition to the growing habit of women’s riding bicycles, and men in particular were very prejudiced. You would hear the subject talked about in the clubs, and if any member dared to hazard the opinion that he could not see why women should not ride bicycles if they felt inclined to, he would at once be met by the retort:

“Indeed! And how would you like to see your wife riding one?”

That generally crushed the progressive spirit.

“Well—no,” he would say shamefacedly. “I must say I shouldn’t care for *that*. In fact, I wouldn’t let her do it.”

And then the others would exclaim more or less in chorus:

"There you are, you see! Really you agree with us that women have no business to, no right to ride bicycles. It's quite wrong and most unwomanly. It's a monstrous thing! It ought not to be allowed!"

Doctors too flared up. "The growing evil" was what they called it. "This growing evil of women riding bicycles" was going, they declared, "to have a deplorable effect upon the race." Women would injure themselves organically; they would no longer be able to bear children, or, at any rate, healthy children, and "the whole of the next generation would in consequence be affected." That, we were told, we should "live to see for ourselves."

The petrol car, too, was then coming into vogue, and its introduction infuriated hundreds of thousands of well-meaning but unimaginative people, not necessarily old or even old-fashioned people. They were prejudiced, as most of us are, against the adoption of anything novel, anything we have not seen before. Certain Masters of Hounds said they would refuse to bring their hounds out if people came to the meets in "those stinking motor cars."

Throughout the West of England this antagonism against cars was peculiarly intense. Harold St. Maur of Stover Park, who had then become Master of the South Devon Foxhounds, was one of the first West-countrymen to buy a car, and in consequence of his having done so some of the County people cut him dead. Indeed, I remember his driving in it to a garden-party at a country house some miles from Stover, and being informed, on his arrival at the lodge, that motors were not to be admitted or chauffeurs given any tea. He therefore told his chauffeur to about turn and drive him home.

Yet, amazing nation that we are, there are still people who regret the abolition of hansom cabs—the most uncomfortable and grotesque vehicles that London was ever cursed with. For they possessed every fault. They were unduly heavy for a vehicle to carry two persons only; they were badly balanced; the driver had to sit in an uncomfortable and cramped attitude; the step was so high that a woman in a tight skirt could hardly reach it with her foot; the wheel smothered you in mud as you got in or out if you were not careful, or unless a com-

missionaire held a basket over the tyre; if the horse fell he could only with great difficulty get up again, owing to the weight on his back; while if the window was down when he fell, your head, as likely as not, would crash through the glass.

I don't know who invented the phrase "good old days," but I know that personally I much prefer the good new days with modern conveniences and modern comforts.* It is true that in those old days people didn't talk about "riding" in a carriage, or in a car, or in a train, even in a tube lift, as they do to-day: they *drove* in carriages and cars and travelled by train. Also children were not "kiddies," and grown men didn't say "ta" for "thank you," and one's wife was not "the wife" or "the Mrs.," and we didn't all say "that's right" instead of "yes." But those are details of small importance, possibly of no importance.

My father had died about that time, and as we were rather a large family there was little enough money left to go round. I had not forgotten the old man's remark: "Lazy rascal—he'll never do a stroke of work until I'm dead." Fortunately I was then finding it possible to earn a livelihood of sorts by means of free-lance journalism, but the work was precarious—one week one would make ten or twelve pounds, the next week perhaps only three or four, and the week after even less. Also one had to be on the "go" morning and noon and night. Yet I preferred such work to work at a fixed salary—so much a week or so much a month I have always found soul-destroying. Why does almost everybody seek out a salaried job, "something regular" as it is called? The "fixed salary" paid if you do your work well or if you do it badly may save one anxiety, but is not otherwise satisfactory.

Of course at the period to which I refer there were far fewer newspaper writers than there are to-day, and no women journalists to speak of. Lord Northcliffe, at that time Alfred Harmsworth, was the first editor to discover that women existed who actually could write a newspaper article, also that there were in addition many women in this country gifted with enough intelligence to be able not only to read a newspaper but to understand what it was all about.

*Written before the World War.

One day a lady who is now a well-known novelist came to me with an idea—an idea which was a brain wave. The daily papers then reproduced very few portraits or illustrations; they had no photographers on their staffs; nor had they many portraits of well-known people, or people likely to become well known, in stock, as they all have to-day.

So the idea had occurred to this lady writer of forming a Company, of which she and I would be Directors, to supply the weekly and the daily Press of London and the Provinces with topical and up-to-date portraits of every kind. Her plan was that we should stock hundreds and eventually thousands of photographs, non-copyright for the most part, of well-known men and women and in particular of people likely or day to become topical or of what is called in journalism "new interest."

This we proceeded to do, classifying and pigeon-holing them so methodically that any one photograph could be found without a moment's delay directly it was wanted, while gummed on to each was a slip of paper with all particulars about the individual. Then all the principal journals were notified that if at any time they needed a portrait of almost anybody at all, the Press Picture Agency, Ltd., would be able to supply it, and letterpress to go with it.

My co-Director was the mainspring of the undertaking, which operated more or less on the following lines:

A paragraph would appear in the papers one morning announcing that Lady Mary Blank, daughter of the Earl and Countess of So-and-So, was about to make her London *début*. At once her portrait would be sent by our Agency to a number of journals, with a paragraph explaining why the portrait had become topical, and giving particulars about Lady Mary, her parents, her tastes and so forth. Each journal wishing to reproduce that portrait would then pay us a fee for the right to reproduce—the fee would be half a guinea or occasionally a guinea, and very rarely three or even four guineas. The photographs, after reproduction, would be returned to us.

When a little time had elapsed, probably Lady Mary Blank would become engaged to be married. Out would come her portraits again, and in would come more half-guineas. And

ith her portraits that time would be sent out also portraits of the man she was going to marry, fees being paid to us in the same way for the right to reproduce our portraits of him.

Then when a further period had passed, probably a child would be born. Out would come the portraits once more, with portraits of the husband—possibly of the baby, too, also photographs of the child's grandmother and grandfather—"Beautiful Countess becomes a Grandmother," "The Earl of So-and-So in the rôle of Grandfather"—for all of which reproduction fees would be paid to us.

Even then the portraits of Lady Mary Blank and those of her husband and of her parents would not necessarily have exhausted their fee-earning capacity. Lady Mary might presently sue for restitution, and ultimately divorce her husband, or be divorced. Then for the fourth time the portraits of the family would become topical, and portraits of the correspondent would be added, also portraits of witnesses and others mixed up in the case, for all of which fees would be paid to the P.P.A.

Indeed, before our Agency had been long in existence many of the daily newspapers and weekly journals had acquired the habit of ringing it up when they needed a portrait of anybody who had suddenly become of news interest, so that in less than a year we were putting out hundreds of portraits weekly. For some time the Company paid a dividend of 12 per cent. and 15 per cent. on its small capital, and was a very flourishing concern. Then imitators came along, also newspapers began to stock their own photographs, while some of the more enterprising engaged photographers to work for them. After a while most of the journals which had been clients of the P.P.A. took to providing their own photographs and keeping tame photographers chained up in their back yards for use when wanted. The profits of the Agency declined, then became non-existent, and eventually the business was sold.

Complete enjoyment of life was prevented, however, by the continued shortage of money. The more one earned the more one seemed to spend. It is commonly said that a bachelor has no right ever to worry, but whoever perpetrated that aphorism was probably a married man. The fault of worrying, of course

is that it can never do good, and that it may, and often does do harm. That my own cloud had a silver lining which was soon to show itself was the last thing I, at that time, suspected.

I suppose six or seven years had passed since the old day at Baron von Orsbach's cramming establishment at Mottingham, and one seemed to have forgotten all about the place and everybody one had met there, when one afternoon while I was alone in my rooms reading Blatchford's cynical "Merrie England" the door opened and my old friend of those long-past days came in—Joseph Tasker, who while still at Mottingham had inherited almost a million pounds sterling.

I saw at a glance that he had changed to some extent, at least in appearance. Probably we had both changed. His expression somehow was different. And he was in deep mourning.

"Where the devil have you been all these years? I've been trying for months to find you," were his first words; then: "Give me a drink, for God's sake. I've just come from a funeral."

We had been sitting there talking for perhaps half an hour, raking up old-time reminiscences, when suddenly he said:

"What do you do with yourself, these days? Do you make this scribbling pay?"

I told him that it enabled me to eke out a livelihood of sorts.

"Yes, and a pretty rotten livelihood, by the look of it," he answered. "These are beastly rooms you have. Why not give it all up and come along with me?"

I asked him to explain exactly what he meant.

"What I mean is this," he went on, and then I knew what he had really come for. "There are all sorts of rotten people hanging on to me, these days—I can't shake them off, whichever way I turn. So often lately I have thought that your company might be preferable to theirs, but when I tried to find you I couldn't find you: the earth seemed to have swallowed you. But yesterday, just by chance, I was told where you lived. Now, why not chuck this newspaper rot and come and travel with me? I am going to America again in a day or two. My suggestion is that you should sign on as my companion for ten years to start with, in return for a salary of a thousand pounds."

year, and, of course, while we are together all your living and travelling expenses will be paid in addition. If a thousand isn't enough for you I'm willing to make it more. Well, what do you say?"

It seemed a sound proposition, but one needing consideration. I thought it might be pleasant to travel; also the prospect of being, at any rate for ten years, free from financial worry made the offer additionally tempting. But then if I closed with the offer I should no longer be my own master, and the thought of not being entirely one's own master had at all times been distasteful to me.

I said: "Give me time to think it over."

"No, I won't," he answered. "I want a 'Yes' or 'No' from you at once. I'll give you five minutes," and, pulling out his watch, he laid it on the table. "I'll pay you fifteen hundred of that will suit you better. Now, start thinking hard."

He mixed himself a brandy-and-soda and handed me a Corona.

"And what will my duties be during the ten years I shall be with you—if I agree?" I asked, when two minutes had passed.

"Duties? Oh, don't be absurd! What 'duties' could there be? We were pals at Mottingham, and I paid you nothing then, did I? It will be the same again—plus your retaining fee."

At the end of the five minutes I said I would accept the offer.

"Good!" he answered. "Come along with me to my lawyers right away and I'll get them to draw up the agreement. You see if I should die suddenly I shouldn't like you to be left stranded, so we'll insert a clause that your journey back to England shall in that case be paid; while if you should die your salary will go on being paid to anybody you like to appoint in the agreement. That suit you all right?"

He paused.

"And by the way," he said, "if my wife should happen to die within the next six months you shall have a season's hunting at my expense in any hunting country you like to choose."

"Your wife?" I exclaimed. "I'd no idea you had married!"

"Hada'n't you? Well, we won't talk about that, if you don't mind. I married a Miss H., met her in Hampstead some years ago—her brother was with you at Beaumont, I believe. And now we'll change the subject."

And so the ten years' contract was drawn up and signed and, on the following day, I began my new life.

Part II

CHAPTER ONE

If people who are inclined to be despondent would always remember that the immediate future may have the unexpected in store for them there would be much less useless worry amongst all classes, much less unnecessary mental misery, and there would be fewer crimes.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of the day Tasker had come to my rooms, I had been a struggling journalist—young journalists are generally said to be “struggling,” perhaps with good reason. An hour later I was in receipt of an assured annual income of £1,500, plus living and travelling and all incidental expenses, for ten years to come. As I write these lines a report appears in the newspapers of the murder by a woman of her two children because she was worried at her husband's being out of work: while she was committing the crime he was obtaining a good situation. I have always found life to be full of ironies of that sort.

Tasker's coach and four had been waiting outside Epitiaux's—now the Pall Mall Restaurant—while we had been talking. Now we drove on it to his lawyers in the City and there our contract was drawn up. Next day it was signed. Next year he drew up a second contract with another firm.

After we had dined at the Criterion he said to me:

“I've got a house in Maresfield Gardens, Fitzjohn's Avenue, where May Yohe used to live, up Swiss Cottage way, you know. I'm going back there now, and you shall meet some of my friends—wonder how they'll strike you?” and he laughed.

He took me into his dining-room when we arrived at Maresfield Gardens. Dinner was in full swing, and champagne flowed freely. Eight men were seated round the table; one or two wore morning coats, the remainder tweed suits. Not one was in evening clothes. There were no women.

I wonder if you ever find that when you are shown suddenly into a room full of strangers its mental "atmosphere" affects you, pleasantly or otherwise? Some people experience that sensation, some don't. Personally, I am susceptible to mental "atmospheric" surroundings, and directly I entered the dining-room I felt the "atmosphere" to be antagonistic.

The diners all looked up, but not one of them attempted to rise, or offered the host a seat at his own table in his own house.

One of them said:

"Hello, old man, have you come back?"

"Oh, no, I've not come back. I'm still at the funeral," Tasker answered dryly.

"Whose funeral was it you went to? I forget."

"Teddy Marsland's. Knew him, didn't you?"

"Teddy Marsland! Is he dead?"

"I expect so—he's been buried twelve hours. Why do you ask such damned silly questions? Here, I want to introduce my friend, old schoolfellow; I've spoken to you about him. I needn't tell him all your names, he'll find out quickly enough."

One or two of them said: "Pleased to meet you, I'm sure," but they didn't look pleased. And I felt glad they didn't greet me with effusion. There are people whose hostility is preferable to their friendship. It was easy to see the sort of creatures they were—parasites every one.

We sat down and drank some more Heidsieck's Dry Monopole—the brand made me think of Calmour at Monte Carlo—and remained talking with the "guests" until past one o'clock in the morning. Presently he told one of them to go out and order his brougham, and the fellow got up and went out of the room as if he had been a servant.

"See you all to-morrow," Tasker said, when a footman had come in to say that the brougham was waiting. "Good-night, everybody—make yourselves at home."

Not one of them noticed the sarcasm in his tone; they hadn't enough intelligence for that. Then he looked at me, and after wishing Good-night to the "friends" gathered around the table, I followed him out of the room.

It was then nearly two. A smart brougham and pair was waiting, with coachman and footman in bright blue and

yellow livery. Later I found out that whenever he took any of his servants out at night he gave each at least a sovereign, and often more. Whatever failings he may have had, meanness was not among them.

"Where shall we go?" he said to me, as we stood upon the doorstep.

I didn't know his night haunts, but suggested several places. Then he spoke to his coachman, and we got in.

That brougham was one of the first in London to be lit inside by electricity, and people in the streets used to stop and stare at it. I soon found that the brougham was well known by sight, at any rate in the West End.

"You won't put your feet on these cushions when you have muddy boots on, will you, old chap?" he said, as we drove quickly down the Finchley Road. "You see, they're satin, and muddy boots spoil them so."

"May I empty ink-bottles on to your billiard table?" I asked.

"All right to laugh," he answered, "but one of those beauties you've just been talking to kept on doing that, and when I asked him not to he said he'd kick my blasted backbone through my hat if I gave him any more lip. By the way, how do they strike you?"

"They don't strike me."

"Nice boys, what? The devil is, I can't get rid of them. They and others stick like flies. You'll meet plenty more soon."

"How do you mean—'can't get rid of them'?"

"They won't go. I've damned and cursed them often enough, told my servants not to admit them, done everything. It's no good. They just won't go."

"Let me have a try," I said. "Give me a free hand—I'll have them out of it fast enough."

"Don't be a fool," he answered. "They'd have you out of it in another way, as soon as look at you. You don't know what they're like. I do."

After driving for some time, we arrived at the Gardenia. I had been there before, but never in such regal fashion—in a brougham and pair with servants in livery between two and three in the morning. It was not, perhaps, London's best night club, yet it was one of the most popular. Evening clothes we

not *de rigueur* there, as at some of the other places, and we were not in evening clothes.

The Gardenia was in Leicester Square, next door to the Alhambra, which is now a cinema. Arthur Roberts and other star actors of that type frequented it, and the youths about town squandering their fathers' money used to think themselves tremendous dogs if they went there. The Corinthian, in St. James's Square, where the Sports Club is now, was a much "classier" place, and the women were really beautiful—one in particular, Mrs. M. (the Honble.), was a great draw there.

And there were many other night haunts. The Waterloo, at the corner of Waterloo Place and Pall Mall—the premises have been pulled down, and Cox's bank stands on the site; the Regent, in Regent Street, almost opposite, where Spencer, the Nottingham boy already mentioned, afterwards ran his "ozone shop" as the unregenerate called it; The Alsathians, in Oxford Street, owned by a man whose fair-haired wife, smothered in diamonds, used to smoke cigars while attending to the needs of the Alsathians' members—anybody in evening clothes and with a fiver in his pocket could be elected a member while he waited on the doormat; the Thalia, in Great Chapel Street; a place in Baker Street, the name of which I forget, run by a degenerate; the Spooleries, with premises underground in Maiden Lane, almost opposite Rule's, to say nothing of one or two scandalous houses which admitted only the richest among the rich and which cannot be described. The Hôtel Continental, in lower Regent Street, where British Columbia House is now, was in its heyday then; from eleven to half-past midnight attractive women, all in evening dress, sat in their dozens in every room at little tables lit by fairy lamps.

As the electrically-lit brougham pulled up at the Gardenia, half a dozen commissionaires came hurrying up, touching their caps and bowing almost to the ground, all anxious, all tumbling over one another to do Tasker some trifling service—anything, it didn't matter what. Because well they knew that later in the night at least a sovereign apiece would be the reward for their servility.

I had friends at the Gardenia, but everybody there seemed to be Tasker's friend. People were "all over him," men as well as women. Yet coarse, gross women, women who drank, women with foul tongues, he detested. Women without morals but with refinement appealed to him, and some were really fond of him. The remainder, of course, were mostly out to get his money.

The night clubs at that time were little harassed by the authorities, and for the most part were well conducted. Drunkenness in the night clubs hardly existed, except when foolish young men thought it a fine thing to get drunk and then become noisy. Brawls were rare, and the women had, at any rate, some sort of self-respect. I remember a rich bounder making a very objectionable remark one night to a woman at the Spooferies. She looked a fragile little thing, but the blow she hit him on the mouth knocked him over—at least, he fell down.

Talking to her afterwards, I said: "You were wrong to do that—the man is made of money; he'd give you anything you ask him for."

"Would he?" she retorted with a snort. "He can keep his — money, the swine!"

The women at the night clubs were all "perfect ladies."

I knew Dundas Slater intimately, who then was manager of the Alhambra. He was at the Gardenia that night, and I brought him into touch with Tasker, who afterwards did him more than one good turn—among other things he made him a present of £300. Slater, though he was terribly hard up, would never have dreamed of asking Tasker to lend him even a fiver, and he literally cried with gratitude. He had a cosy flat in the top of Piccadilly Mansions at the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue, where we used to have merry little suppers—suppers where creatures of the type of Tasker's parasites would not have been tolerated for a moment. Slater's wife was extremely pretty and absolutely fascinating, but she found him trying at times, I think, though he worshipped her. For a man he was curiously highly strung. And he used to boast about being "religious." We found out afterwards that he went to church on Christmas Days.

S., the famous jockey, then in his heyday, was not one of Nature's little gentlemen. His sense of proportion and of his own importance had become clouded by his success, and one afternoon when I was with Slater I was introduced to the boy. Slater, who was always anxious to do the right thing and to please people when he could, said to S. when we had talked for a little while:

"Any afternoon or evening you like to come along to the theatre, Mr. S., I shall be most happy to place a couple of stalls at your disposal."

S. turned and looked Slater up and down.

"Anything wrong with the boxes?" he asked.

Another man at the Gardenia that night—I met him then for the first time—was Abington Baird, accompanied by Mitchell the prize-fighter and one or two other boxing men, and, I think, Roberts, the billiards champion. Baird was a finished horseman, and a wonderful judge of pace when riding between the flags, but he was drinking a good deal too hard. The last time I saw him he was dying in an hotel in New Orleans. He "died suddenly" the newspapers said. Considering the scum who accompanied him everywhere, and that he rarely had less than a thousand pounds in his pockets, the astonishing thing was that he hadn't "died" sooner. However, *de mortuis*. As he is dead I won't say more about him.

We didn't go home that night. The brougham with its electric lights waited in Leicester Square until we came out, and then Tasker suggested our driving down to Spitalfields. To get there took a long time, but we arrived at last and pulled up at a public-house called the "Paul's Head." A few gold coins scattered about had the effect of arousing the publican and making him produce a bottle of champagne, which we consumed inside the brougham, while the coachman and footman, seated outside, polished off another bottle—the constable on duty having been a "recipient," quite forgot to look our way.

After that we scrambled out and made our way on foot into Dorset Street, where Tasker was evidently known to the men in charge of the doss-houses. For hardly had he appeared when they at once marshalled all the human derelicts they

could find who had been unable to afford the price of a bed, and in a few minutes each was in possession of two golden sovereigns. The majority, I remember, were too much astonished or too dazed even to express gratitude.

Then back towards the West End until we came to Blackfriars Bridge, where we got out once more, Tasker telling his coachman to drive on and await us under Charing Cross railway arch. And then his eccentricity, his distorted idea of philanthropy, entered on a new phase.

At every Embankment bench we came to he stopped, shook the wretched sleepers into wakefulness, and slipped a couple of sovereigns into the hand of each. There must have been over a hundred poor fellows sleeping there that night, and that, probably, was the happiest nightmare they ever in their lives experienced. At least, not necessarily the happiest, for it was not the only time he indulged in the same vagary.

Then from Charing Cross to Battersea, but on a different errand.

"You can go home now," he said to his coachman when we reached Battersea Bridge—it was broad daylight then. I saw him push some paper into the coachman's hand, then give the footman some money too. Then he slipped his arm through mine, and we walked towards Battersea Park.

The Park was already open, and people were moving about in it. The morning was lovely. Soon bicycles began to arrive—push bicycles, first in twos and threes, then in dozens, then in groups of twenty or more. The riders were well-dressed people, smart-looking men and pretty women. They were the Society folk who that summer had started the fashion of bicycling to Battersea Park early in the morning and then having breakfast there—ham and eggs and hot rolls.

"Just like the working classes," they used to call it, only the working classes even before the war didn't necessarily all breakfast off ham and eggs and hot rolls.

Tasker had meant to go to America again at once, but he changed his mind and stayed in London—I soon realized that

he rarely knew from day to day, sometimes barely from hour to hour, what he was going to do next.

I was with him in Coventry Street one afternoon, some days later, when suddenly he said:

"By the way, I promised to give Brentwood a fire-engine." At least I think he said Brentwood; his place, as it was then, Middleton Hall, where old Countess Tasker had lived, is close to Brentwood. "I'll buy one now, while I think of it. Do you know a good fire-engine shop?"

I suggested Merryweather's, but he went up to a policeman:

"Will you tell me where I can buy a fire-engine, please?" he said.

The policeman stared at him rather hard:

"You've been out in the sun, my lad," he answered. "You'd better go home."

Tasker got angry, or pretended to be angry. Thereupon the constable beckoned to a companion, and together they looked him up and down, then had a short confabulation in undertones.

"If you really want a fire-engine," the first constable said, "you had better go to —," and he gave a name and an address.

Tasker thanked him very much, gave him a sovereign and the other constable one too, and then walked away with me, the policemen staring after him with bulging eyes.

When we came to the shop he went in and said:

"How much are your fire-engines, please?"

"Fire-engines?" the man repeated, rather astonished.

"Yes, fire-engines. Did I say bananas? I'm sorry. How much are they—the fire-engines, I mean, not the bananas."

The assistant looked frightened, and backed away for a few steps, then turned quickly and went into an inner room. Presently he returned with an older man—the manager.

"Fire-engines, sir?" the manager said with a fatuous smile, "soaping" his hands affably. That he believed Tasker to be mentally unsound, I saw at once. Evidently he meant to humour him.

"Yes. I want a good one."

The man's smile broadened.

"Oh, we have some very good ones, sir. Would you need an escape, too?"

"Do they generally have escapes?"

"Generally, sir. Not always."

"Then I'll have an escape as well. How much will that be together?"

"I will ascertain, sir, if you will kindly wait a moment."

Then he looked at me questioningly, believing me to be in charge of a lunatic, and he was still looking when Tasker produced his wallet from his pocket, pulled out a great roll of bank-notes and handed him a note for £1,000.

"Take it out of that, will you, if it's enough? I'll give you the address I want it sent to."

The man's face was a study. And then his eyes, like the constables', began to bulge.

After that, Tasker remembered that he wanted a new coach, and we walked on to a coach-builder's. In a few minutes the coach had been bought, though he didn't pay for it then and there—fortunately, as it proved.

"Does that sum cover everything?" he asked. "I don't want to have to pay for a lot of extras afterwards."

"That covers everything," the man assured him.

Some days later the coach arrived, but when we went out to look at it we found it had no cushions. At once Tasker rang up the coachbuilder's.

"Where are the cushions of my coach?" he asked.

"Oh, cushions are not included, sir," the man answered. "We quote separately for those."

"Didn't you tell me the coach would be complete, that there would be no extras? Do you call a coach complete which has no cushions?"

"I am sorry, sir, but cushions were not included in the price we quoted."

"In that case you had better take the coach back," he replied, and rang off.

The coach went back.

CHAPTER TWO

MIDDLETON HALL was a well-furnished, comfortable old place and we used to drive down there with his team once or twice a week. And always some of his sycophants would be there, odious people, the majority no better than hoodlums, and all aiming to get all they could out of him. And though he knew that they fleeced him he seemed not to mind. This may have been because they for ever flattered his vanity and played up to his weaknesses in every way they could. For he had weaknesses--and the parasites were alive to every one of them.

There were always lots of letters awaiting him at Middleton Hall, most of which he would generally shovel unopened into a waste-paper basket. One day he said to me:

"You might open some of those letters sometimes, if you feel inclined. Probably most of them are begging letters, so if any of the writers seem to you to be deserving of help, tell me and I'll help them."

And so about once a week I used to open and read some of the letters, and the contents of many were instructive and illuminating. Some were ordinary begging letters from quite poor people; some came obviously from professional writers of begging letters; but the majority were from people of quite a different class. Thus a *padre* would cover four pages with small, neat hand-writing in the hope of extracting a fiver to pay for a new font; a peer's son would send a dozen lines--"so awfully grateful if you could lend me a thousand pounds, or two thousand would be better"; a flash woman would brazenly send "certain" photographs of herself and suggest repayment in kind for a loan up to any amount. Many came from people who socially were quite well known--people one would not have suspected of being even temporarily embarrassed financially, less still of having the effrontery to beg of a total stranger.

Some of the letters I have by me still, as I started a collection of the most inspiring. Of course, scores came from those splendid philanthropists who out of sheer love of humanity longed to do Tasker a good turn by showing him how he could

increase his fortune enormously by investing a portion of it in this or that enterprise. Others wrote asking for funds to finance exploration schemes, to finance syndicates to recover treasure from the bottom of the sea, or to buy some never-heard-of island in some remote ocean where the sea-gulls were said to be exceptionally active in the production of guano.

Crack-brained inventors, missionaries of every creed, people anxious to provide naked Hottentots with Turkish towels or something of the sort, to distribute hymn-books among the savage tribes of Africa, New Guinea and such-like places, were persistent in their application for doles, and so were two ladies who had a scheme for endowing an institute for, I think, paralytic cats.

One man who wrote regularly knew of some mystic lake in South America into which in past centuries the native priests had been in the habit of casting treasure untold in sacrifice to their gods. The lake lay in an extinct crater, and the Company in which he was interested had discovered an engineering genius who could make machinery to drill a hole in the bottom of the lake and so drain off all the water, when lo!—the treasure would lie exposed and waiting to be scraped up.

Capital was eventually found for the enterprise, I heard afterwards, but then the discovery was made that the bed of the lake was solid lava through which the drill could not bore. Then an attempt was made to get at the treasure by scooping away the soil under the banks of the sacred lake; but just as the water was becoming shallow enough for operations to be begun—the sides of the lake fell in!

Then one day, wonder of wonders, a drill made of steel tempered by some new and marvellous process did actually bore through the lava bed—so the Company said. Now fortune was surely at last in sight for the shareholders—but no: the mud at the bottom of the lake was found to be yards deep, much too deep for the treasure ever to be got out of it. So the Board of Directors held a stormy meeting and the Company went into liquidation.

"There are rich men with even fewer brains than I have," he said laconically.

And before I had been with him many weeks, I too began to get letters. How one's friends and acquaintances, as well as strangers, came to know that one had become companion to a thrifless young millionaire was astonishing. And most of one's acquaintances had suddenly grown so extremely cordial. "Old schoolfellows," too: they seemed to ripen in a night on every bush. My memory must have been lamentably defective in those days, because the number of letters I got beginning "My dear old chap," which went on to "recall" incidents at school—not one of which I could remember—was remarkable. Some of the writers had even taken pains to find out where I had been at school!

Tasker gave away enormous sums in charity, but rarely subscribed to public appeals for funds for any charitable or philanthropic organization whatever. He used to say that he liked to know that the people needing the money got it, and that half of it was not squandered on superfluous administration. Yet he persistently refused ever to give a shilling to Sir Walter Besant, though many a time I tried to get him to. Had Sir Walter been entrusted with even a few thousands a year to make good use of he would have done more practical good with it than any man in London at that time, not excepting Father Dolling, the unorthodox East End *papre*, to whom Tasker was very generous from first to last.

As an example of his mental kinks and singular generosity, one night when we were dining at a well-known restaurant he began to find fault with everything and everybody, and finally said he wanted to see the *chef*.

Up came the *chef* looking nervous and *affairé*, whereupon Tasker spoke to him very freely indeed; he ended by telling him to get back to his ——— kitchen and stew the cat's meat in it. When he had gone the *maitre d'hôtel*, who was a sort of confidential friend of Tasker's, said to him reproachfully:

"That poor man lost his daughter yesterday, Mr. Tasker—the only child he had. He worshipped her, and he's broken-hearted. And now his wife is ill, too. That's why everything has gone wrong to-night. He hardly knows what he's about."

Tasker looked up.

"Is that the truth," he asked, "or are you telling me a lot of damned lies?"

"Ask the manager if you don't believe me," the man answered with a shrug.

"Tell that *chef* to come back."

The man returned. Tasker expressed his sympathy, apologized for what he had said, and crushed a £100 note into his hand. Then he turned to me:

"Remind me early to-morrow to send the best doctor in London to see that man's wife," he said.

It was that same evening, I remember, that an extremely pretty woman, accompanied by a ferocious-looking man not unlike the individual in Paris whom we had accused in the newspaper of wilful murder, happened to dine at a table close to ours. Greatly attracted, Tasker kept on staring at her, until all at once her companion, after glaring in our direction threateningly once or twice, jumped up from his chair and came over to us.

"I wish to God you wouldn't stare at my wife like that, sir!" he stormed, so that the people all about could hear.

Tasker looked up at him calmly. Then the seraphic smile which he kept for special occasions spread over his face, and he replied gently:

"Then, my dear sir, you ought not to have married such a pretty woman."

The woman heard him, and beamed. The man tried to remain indignant, but presently his mouth began to stretch and he was obliged to grin. Finally we were asked to join them and have a glass of wine, and soon everything was forgiven and forgotten and we were all on the best of terms.

"I don't know why I didn't knock your head off," I heard the man say to Tasker as we were being helped on with our coats. "If it had been anybody but you I should have."

And that was the secret of his success—if the getting out of awkward situations can be said to constitute any sort of success: his personality. He said things and did things, was always saying them and doing them, which would have landed

anybody else in boiling water, if I may put it so, and as likely as not have ended in litigation.

Another incident occurs to me which also was not devoid of humour. One night in a well-known American bar in the West End we were standing talking, when there entered a most awful-looking person with a face like fire and covered with boils and big red pimples - the stranger's nose alone spoke of hogsheads of vintage port. He sat heavily down at a table, and was considering what he would have to drink, when Tasker drew a waiter aside and said to him in an undertone:

"You see that gentleman? He is a friend of mine. He wants one of those glasses" - indicating some enormous tumblers on a shelf, which must have held quite a quart - "full of milk."

"Milk, sir?" the waiter exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes, you fool, and shut up. Here's the money, and something for yourself. Fill one of those tanks up with milk as quickly as you can, and take it to him."

A minute later the waiter stalked the entire length of the bar with the bath of milk on a tray, and solemnly placed it on the table at the stranger's elbow. A roar of laughter from everybody followed, and the man with the flaming face sprang to his feet.

"Who the hell ordered that?" he burst out with eyes ablaze, furious at being thus brought into public ridicule.

"Your friend, sir," and the waiter indicated Tasker.

In four strides the man stood by him; his face had turned livid.

And again Tasker put up the seraphic smile of innocence which seemed instantly to allay wrath.

"I did order it for you, old chap," he said. "I hope you'll forgive me. Have one with me now - waiter, a magnum of Heidsieck's Dry Monopole for this gentleman!"

And the man laughed. His impotent fury of some moments before had vanished. A few minutes later they were vowing eternal friendship.

It is commonly supposed that the people who have "the right" information about horse-races are owners, trainers and jockeys. The only really trustworthy information comes from

ever getting has come almost always from men in the gutter—the deeper the gutter the better. Thus it was a down-at-heel herelict watering horses on Epsom Downs who told me “for jawd’s sake” to back Jeddah—it won at 100 to 1. A gipsy man in the Downs on the night before another Derby was my adviser about Signorinetta—another 100 to 1 winner.

Tasker generally took no interest in any form of gambling, but some years before he had driven on his coach to the Derby—he didn’t himself handle the ribbons; that duty he deputed to a fat, red-faced, round-faced man who knew all about horses and their management and was entirely to be trusted. While the horses were at the post, in fact after the false start, a disreputable-looking individual suddenly forced his way out of the crowd and rushed up to the coach, frantic with excitement.

“Back Sir ‘Ugo, sir!” he cried out. “For ‘Eavin’s sake back Sir ‘Ugol Put every bob you’ve got on ‘im!”

He was a man for whom Tasker had once done some good turn.

Well, he backed Sir Hugo. He was just in time. He backed it for £100 to win at 40 to 1. Sir Hugo won the Derby, and Tasker gave £2,000 of the £4,000 he had won to the man who had given him the tip.

Why men in the gutter so often get the right information, and how they get it, would be interesting to know. An owner’s or a trainer’s tip is the last I would ever act on.

To get through nearly a million of money, nearly £50,000 a year, if you don’t gamble, is more difficult than might appear. Money was being flung about day and night, yet the supply seemed to be inexhaustible. Tasker’s most extravagant hobby was probably the collecting of pedigree diamonds. Perhaps you didn’t know that diamonds had pedigrees, but they have—some of them. And a flaw in a diamond’s pedigree, a blot on its scutcheon, so to speak, can lead to all sorts of unpleasant things. That happened in the case of the famous Agra diamond.

Tasker had bought it of Streeter, the Bond Street jeweller. Previous to buying the Agra, he had bought other things of Streeter among them a black and white pearl, for £300; a

model of the Holy City made of beaten gold and inlaid with rubies and other gems, for £1,200; and Streeter had made him a model in silver of his 500-ton yacht, the *Zingara*, at a cost of £450.

About two o'clock one morning a man arrived with several friends at Maresfield Gardens, and was admitted. Tasker was in bed, but not asleep, and the man on being shown into his bedroom produced from his pocket seven large diamonds which he said he could "let him have" for £30,000.

"But for God's sake don't let anybody know about this," he exclaimed, "or I shall get my throat cut!"

He didn't say why he would get his throat cut or who would cut it.

Tasker, after examining them, didn't buy any of those stones, but he agreed instead to pay £15,000 for the Agra pedigree diamond, the brilliancy of which was said to surpass even that of the historic and unlucky Hope diamond which he had long coveted.

The Agra had an interesting history. Owned originally by Sultan Baber, who had taken it from an Indian Rajah and who founded the Mogul Empire in 1526, it passed in time to his son, and again changed hands during the Battle of Agra. Then after various vicissitudes it came into the possession of the notorious Nadir Shah in 1739, who was assassinated at Khorassan by his nephew, and eventually it was discovered and bought by Hertz, the Paris diamond dealer, who in his turn sold it for £14,000. In the document supplied with it the gem and its history were referred to at some length: "Its delicate lines," ran one sentence, "may be said to instil the dorous purple of a newborn rose, filled with the face of Heaven."

For the Hope blue diamond Tasker had offered to pay £32,000, but the stone was in Chancery, and the consent of the Court to its sale could not be obtained. Therefore he bought instead the Stafford collection, said to include gems of every known hue, for £10,000. He used to buy diamonds by fits and starts, and a fit or a start was evidently upon him at about that time, for within a few months he paid a jeweller

approximately £87,000,* over and above sums which he paid to other dealers for gems and jewellery.

Subsequently a flaw or an alleged flaw was discovered in the gra's pedigree, which led to rather a big lawsuit.

CHAPTER THREE

ONE got terribly tired of the company of the parasites of whom I have already spoken, with their asinine "intelligence" and their never-ending stream of filthy stories. I think there are few things more wearisome, more nerve-racking, than to be compelled to listen hour after hour and day after day to stories more hoggish than another and almost all devoid of humour, to say nothing of wit. An unclean story seems to me to be bearable only when it has a really funny point. The ceaselessness those parasites loved to wallow in had no point of any kind.

Tasker had often spoken of leaving London for awhile and travelling about the world again—he had already been round the world once, if not twice—but with his habit of repeatedly changing his mind, nothing had happened. So that when one day some time after I had joined him he said he had actually decided to go to Paris, and to go from there to other Continental capitals, the news was gratifying.

Whenever he had travelled in England we had been accompanied by two servants, a man whose name I forget, who I think had been a hairdresser, and a Hindu originally a billiard-marker in a Bombay club, whom Tasker had attached to himself when in India some years before. That was pleasant, of course; and yet in spite of the luxury in which one then lived I sometimes thought with regret of the hunting and steeple-chasing and shooting which had become

* The figure £87,000 was given in an article published in *The Star*, and presumably is correct. The other figures quoted I know to be correct.—B. J. T.

joys of the past, for Tasker cared for none of those things. And through no fault of his own. His aunt, Countess Tasker, had, when he was a boy, refused to let him learn to ride; she thought he might fall off his horse and hurt himself. And she had not let him learn to shoot; she knew that accidents with guns sometimes happen even when the guns are not loaded!

A man in the City had charge of Tasker's affairs at that period.

Generally the man was half-drunk by lunch time and "blotto" before dinner, but Tasker used to say he was "as sober as a judge at nine o'clock in the morning, so what does it matter?" Often I had tried to get that City man side-tracked, but Tasker could be very obstinate at times. And so the man remained.

Money opens all doors and shuts all mouths in London, and in other places, too, as I had realized before I had been with Tasker many months. People talk glibly about "Continental vice" and the rest of it, and amug Pharisees amongst us thank God that we are not as other nations are, and so on. Hypocrisy, every bit of it—or ignorance.

I may be contradicted when I say so, yet I say it knowing it to be the truth—there is no form of vice prevalent on the Continent, or probably in any part of the world, which cannot be found in London *if you will pay enough to find it*. The reason London is more "moral" [*sic*] than Continental capitals is that vice here does not flaunt itself in public, or go about half exposed, as it does in some countries—I don't allude, of course, to the commonplace vice of the streets. In London everything is kept under, hidden, smothered. In most other countries it is not. That is the only difference.

We left London at a few hours' notice, and on our arrival at the Hôtel Continental in Paris a suite of rooms awaited us. The *concierges* beamed and bowed as we drove up. The manager himself came out, wreathed in smiles, to welcome us. The *maître d'hôtel*, the waiters, the entire staff, everybody connected with the place, appeared to be in a flutter of pleasurable excitement. For it was not the first time by many that Tasker had stayed at the Continental, and there is no truer saying than that "money talks."

I am wrong. Money doesn't talk. It shouts and screams. Nothing in the world really counts but money. It can buy everything, including love. Everything but one thing—happiness. Indeed it can buy even that if properly directed. Since some years ago when I began to help Tasker to spend his fortune I have mixed with many people of many nationalities, good and bad, rich and poor, thoroughbred and mongrel, and I have yet to find the fabulously rich man who is happy—really happy. Those who would be happy were they rich, really happy because they would spend the bulk of their fortune on making others happy, are not rich; I have met dozens of men and women with practical schemes, splendid plans for making a big section of humanity happier than it is, who would put those schemes and plans into operation if they became rich—but they don't become rich. And I have met scores of foolish folk who never meant or wanted to do any good to anybody, and who ought never to have had fortunes, who inherited immense wealth, and having squandered it inherited more: another of Life's ironies and inconsistencies.

The French have an excellent plan for preventing the foolish from dissipating fortunes in which they themselves will only have an interest. It is called a *conseil de famille*. A. has inherited a big fortune and shows signs of getting rid of it. His kinsfolk interested in the future of that fortune hold a *conseil de famille*. It is pointed out that A., by making an ass of himself, is endangering the future of the invested capital, which should one day be theirs. So they say: "This must be stopped, and at once."

And it is stopped, and at once, very effectually. A. is bluntly told by the family lawyer that he has proved himself to be a person unfit to have control of a fortune, and that therefore, until he betrays signs of intelligence, he will be put on an allowance. That allowance he will be at liberty to squander if he chooses to, he is further told, but not under any circumstances will it be increased.

And generally the result is satisfactory. The spendthrift, thus pulled up sharply, turns over a new leaf. If some such plan obtained in England it would be well.

You hear a lot of talk about birth and breeding being of more value than money. Theoretically they are. In practice they are not--so far as the individual himself is concerned. You and I may prefer to associate with a man of culture, though he may happen to be a poor man, in preference to associating with a rich cad. But you and I are only units of the great concrete. Let loose in London, or anywhere else you like, two men of about the same age, one with a hundred or two a year but with education, culture and refinement, in short, what is commonly called a gentleman; the other without culture or refinement but with an assured income of £30,000 a year--and watch their progress.

Which will be the more sought after? Which of the two will get the attention of your friends in the world of fashion? Which will receive the invitations to important dinner parties and receptions and be pressed to stay in country houses where there is plenty of sport to be had--especially if in those houses there are marriageable daughters? Which will be treated with respect and deference by subordinates, offered lucrative posts on Boards of Directors of commercial concerns by men of influence, and pushed forward for honours and distinction--which? Your well-bred man who is a pauper? No, your boulder who is half a millionaire or more.

I am not borrowing the views or parroting the expressions or opinions of others. All who live with their eyes open and consequently see life as it is, though they may continue to talk about "blood telling," "breeding counting in the long run," and the rest of it, know that money "gets there" every time in a world where half of us are sycophants and the other half are hypocrites.

But all this is digression. Tasker, whatever else he may have been, was not a snob. He was, however, one of those beings who live only for sensation and excitement, so that when he read in a Paris newspaper that a day or two later an anarchist named Emile Henri was to be guillotined, he at once decided to witness the revolting spectacle.

"Oh, yes," he was told on inquiry, "for a *monsieur of monsieur's* high rank" (the "high rank" of being in receipt of nearly £1,000 a week). "It will be easy to obtain facilities so that

monsieur shall visit the condemned one in his cell, and remain close to the scaffold during the execution."

And so, without difficulty, everything was arranged, though while a journalist in Paris I had already witnessed an execution.

Now the streaks of dawn were piercing the dark and heavy clouds as the electrically-lit brougham sped along the wet and slippery streets. I had before mingled in many cosmopolitan and strange crowds, but never before had I found myself surrounded by such an oddly-assorted mob as had assembled that morning in Place la Roquette. Outlined a hundred yards away the scaffold with its guillotine could be seen indistinctly, rising out of the grey mist beyond the four-foot barricade of stout timber erected to keep the crowd at a distance. The *canaille* of the capital was there in its thousands, reminiscent of the French Revolution scenes which one has read about. But there were, too, types of humanity so remarkable that I have never quite forgotten them.

Some were villainous types enough. Others were the reverse. Women were there in plenty—English, Belgian, French of course, Portuguese, German, women of many nations, some apparently well-to-do *bourgeoisie*, some sensation seekers purely and lovers of the sinister and the morbid, while many, half-hidden in wraps and furs with the morning light revealing what the gloom of night had hidden, bore the impress of their calling stamped on their every feature.

The brougham had gone back to the hotel, and for awhile we continued to mix with the unsavoury throng refreshing itself with absinthe in a cabaret near by. Presently the plain clothes police representative who accompanied us got up from the table where the three of us sat, and asked if we would be "so good as to come along now."

When we entered his cell with Monsieur Brun, who was then Governor of the jail, one or two officials and a couple of journalists, the prisoner was still asleep, curled up on his *paillasse*. The Governor shook the *paillasse* gently, and the man awoke with a start. Then he sat up.

"Emile Henri," Monsieur Brun said in rather a faltering voice, "your hour has come—be brave."

MOVING RECOLLECTIONS

Without speaking, the man looked round at us all—I see his scared expression still. Then he got up and began to dress. He was offered some rum, which he refused. Then someone offered him a cigarette, but he pushed it away. As he would like to see the Chaplain, he shook his head in emphasis.

As the prison clock struck four, the great gates opening to the barricaded square swung back, and eight of us, including Diebler, the executioner, passed solemnly under the broad stone arch on our way to the scaffold, round which a dozen or so journalists were already assembled.

It was then broad daylight, and the serried mass of white faces topping the stout wooden barricade about eighty yards from us was in marked contrast to the sombre surroundings.

The final preparations were completed in a few moments. Then Diebler turned to the Governor:

"All is ready," he said.

With a swift motion of the hand Monsieur Brun signalled Henri to advance. As he did so some half-hearted cheering as well as booing arose from the crowd. It struck me that at that supreme moment the Governor looked even paler than the criminal. At the plank ready to receive him the condemned man stopped abruptly.

"*Courage, camarades!*" he exclaimed in a weak voice. Then rather louder: "*Vive l'anarchie!*"

A section of the distant crowd feebly echoed the cry. They repeated it while he was being strapped to the plank. They were about to repeat it when with a thud the knife fell.

As it did so a woman I had noticed craning out of a window overlooking the square gave a piercing scream, and I remember seeing some of the journalists look up at her quickly. Tasker handed me his open flask.

Already the horrid rabble was scrambling over the barricade and surging into the square, racing frantically towards the guillotine, the leaders hitting at one another with fists and sticks and umbrellas, each in a mad attempt to be the first to reach the scaffold. What satisfaction they derived from watching the assistants sponging down the boards, the block and the great blade I cannot imagine. Yet hundreds remained

there gazing at it all, or craning over one another's shoulders in their endeavour to catch a glimpse of the proceedings. It had been a hideous spectacle, and the whole scene rose up before me again many times during the nights which followed.

We had no difficulty in finding a *fiacre*, and were soon rattling over the cobblestones back towards our hotel. Within half a mile of the site of the tragedy music floated out on the still morning air through some open windows, and we passed a still brilliantly illuminated mansion where the forms of dancers could be seen silhouetted on the blinds.

"Lady Blank's carriage!" an English lackey, resplendent in powdered head, and plush, and silken hose, bellowed down the line of carriages, as our humble vehicle rattled past. "Lady Blank's carriage!"

"Whose house is that?" Tasker inquired of our driver.

"Monsieur le Baron d'A---'s," came the reply. "You saw that fellow, Monsieur?" indicating the lackey. The driver jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction from which we had come. "He was like that some years ago," he added with a shrug.

"You mean Emile Henri was a footman?" Tasker asked in French.

The driver nodded. Then, showing his profile, he raised his elbow to indicate the act of drinking.

"They dismissed him for that, *pauvre bête*," he said.

"And he became an anarchist?"

"He was half anarchist before. He always was mad."

In the Rue Ste. Anne some women with tousled yellow hair were peeping out between their blinds. Our driver noticed them and again became communicative.

"He took to that afterwards," he said, jerking his thumb as he had done before, in the direction of the house.

"Took to what?"

"*Maisonnelles d'amour*," he answered with a grin. Then he screwed himself round on his box-seat and jerked his reins.

"Quite a moral story," Tasker said as he lit a cigarette and drew the collar of his great fur coat more closely round his throat. "First a good billet and a good wage, then drink, then infamy then crime, and last of all—the guillotine."

CHAPTER FOUR

NEVERTHELESS it was delightful to be in Paris again. Before I had lived there as a worker. Now I was there as a man of leisure. I visited some of the old haunts in Clichy and elsewhere, but even during my comparatively brief absence many changes had taken place. Most of my friends had disappeared, and none knew where they had gone. Two little artists who had loved each other dearly had been found drowned in the Seine, locked in each other's arms, the garrulous old woman who had formerly looked after me told me. Yes, it was very sad, she went on, "they were both so pretty, and each so fond of the other. Well, it was *la vie*, it was *l'amour*," and she shrugged her shoulders and asked me to come in and join her in an *apéritif* for the sake of old times.

The newspaper I had worked for near Paris was dead. It had expired ingloriously, I was told, a few had mourned it. The open drain still ran along the street. The sight of the *estaminet* beyond it made me think again of the man we had publicly charged with wilful murder, who had ended by falling on my neck.

Sycophants turned up in Paris, as they did in almost every city we stayed in during the years which followed; but somehow foreign sycophants seemed to be less aggressively reprehensible than most of the home-bred variety. What used to annoy Tasker was the sight of Englishmen of a certain type—one never saw the type in England—who in Paris thought nothing of sprawling in shops and remaining with their hats on while polite and smiling women attended to their wants; some would even sit on the counters, smoking pipes and occasionally making offensive remarks in English about the French—remarks understood by French folk happening to be near. Later the same class would be seen in the stalls of the opera or in leading theatres, wearing any sort of clothes—tweed and lounge suits for preference. Fortunately that breed seems to have died out; at any rate in Paris it is not conspicuous to-day. Or perhaps they were killed in the war.

It seems odd that some men should change their manners directly they get outside their own country.

instance, are the most delightful and hospitable people when you meet them in America. Yet look at some of the Americans you come across in London—so loud, aggressive, boastful. What becomes of those Americans when they go back to the States? For you never see them there.

Which reminds me of a problem that has often puzzled me—who started the silly saying that Americans said they won the 1914-1918 war? I know many Americans, here and on the other side, and I met many American officers in their camps close to Winchester as well as in France during that war. Never did I hear one of them say, or even hint, that America won the war. And yet, when you come to think of it—should we have managed to muddle through in the end if America had not come in? Easy enough now to declare that we should—but *should we?*

Again I have digressed. I had thought that I knew my way about Paris pretty well, but I found that Tasker knew his Paris far better. He had a French friend, a Member of the Chamber of Deputies, who showed us parts of the city which we had never seen before, and of the existence of which probably few Parisians even are aware. Everybody knows that there are strange caves and tunnels and catacombs under Paris, some of which are put to curious uses, and plenty of men who are familiar with Paris have seen its mighty sewers, also the dark places where the big mushrooms grow. Yet few, I think, are aware that under parts of the capital, especially in the district about Rue de la Harpe, are to be found large quarries arched over, and that on the tops of those arches some of the biggest houses in Paris have been built. In some of those quarries into which we were conducted the arches could be seen to be shored up with heavy baulks of timber, cracks and fissures in the arches being distinctly visible.

"This is interesting," our friend said. Then he went on to explain to us how, when long ago Paris began to grow, the stone for building purposes was obtained from the giant quarries some miles distant from the town. But gradually Paris spread until it came close to the quarries, whereupon, in order to enable it to continue to expand, those arches were constructed over the quarries and the houses then erected o

Park with a friend, during the London season, when a big limousine drew up near the Achilles statue and a woman got out of it. She wore a hat with an enormous brim, and was dressed like Marie Antoinette, and she carried a tall walking-stick also of the period of Louis XVII. Her face at once struck me as being familiar, and then the eyes——

No, I had not forgotten those magnetic eyes, I never could forget them. I recognized the girl we had known in Paris!

"I knew that woman long ago in Paris," I said to my friend.

"I am sorry to hear that," he answered with a laugh. "You know who she is now, surely?"

I told him the name we had known her by.

"But you know who she is now?" he repeated. "You've heard of Madame X. anyhow."

Heard of her! Who hadn't heard of the notorious Madame X. who owned two establishments in a street near Bond Street, and was said to own three similar places in different parts of the West End, as well as two in Paris? I was amazed. For I knew all about those —— Street establishments of X.'s, but never for an instant had I associated her with the hypnotic girl we had known in Paris when in her twenties.

One of her "beauty" shops in —— Street attracted men only. The other attracted women as well as men. In the former a beautiful young man, with long eyelashes and a complexion like a girl's, presided. In the latter was one of the loveliest girls I have ever seen. It used to be said of Madame X. ——

But no matter. One may plead again *de mortuis*—I am told she is dead. The fact that not until the war was well advanced was she deported from this country as an "undesirable alien," was significant. Her knowledge concerning certain matters must have been almost unlimited.

X. made good use of the mesmeric power she wielded, for every girl she engaged had, before joining any establishment of hers, to go down on her knees in front of her, put her hands together, and swear never to reveal to any person any of the secrets of the house. And the girls, when they had sworn that oath, became literally unable to break their word, no matter how great the pressure put upon them to give evidence.

Tasker took a dislike to Paris after his break with the girl who afterwards was to become Madame X., and at a few hours' notice our baggage was packed and we were on our way to Germany. In Coblenz an incident happened which showed us how civilians struck the Germans at that time. We were chatting in a beer garden with some young German officers, who were rather coldly polite, when an English friend of ours turned up unexpectedly—he had once been our host at the Royal Barracks in Dublin.

"Let me introduce Captain . . .," Tasker said, addressing the German subalterns.

Instantly the subalterns sprang to their feet, clicked their heels, saluted. And from then onward the whole of their attention was centred on our friend, greatly to his amusement. He, being a soldier, was a Somebody in Germany. We, being civilians merely, were nobodies—we were less than nobodies.

However, they showed us over the then impregnable Ehrenbreitstein fortress, and other places of interest, and were in other respects friendly. And I remember how even in those days the German students used to "chip" us about the future of the British Empire. When a year or two later we returned to Germany that "chipping" had a sting in it which had not been there before.

From Germany we travelled into several European countries, wandering from place to place without any fixed itinerary. Often we would leave a town at an hour's notice to go on to another, sometimes in the middle of the night. Tasker used to laugh at his own eccentricity sometimes and say: "I am sure some of my forbears must have been carpet-baggers." But he never went to Russia, though he always meant to. Russia was the one country I had long wanted to see.

We crossed to America on that occasion I think from Le Havre—I kept no diary—and, if I remember aright, by the *Touraine* of the Compagnie Transatlantique: the ship was burnt some years later. I had never crossed the Atlantic before, and Americans aboard so dinned it into me that there was no city the world ever to compare with New York in any one way that when we landed I was disappointed: the Statue of Liberty

impressed me more than did New York City. The sky-scrapers were impressive, of course; but then as almost all the buildings in New York are sky-scrapers the effect was less pronounced than it otherwise might have been. Naturally Tasker had scores of friends in New York, as I afterwards found he had in cities in most countries. His being a passenger in the *Touraine* having been announced in the newspapers in advance, he was besieged by reporters before we disembarked, while friends crowded about him as soon as we went ashore.

Though we had quite a gay time during those months in New York, we met few of the select Four Hundred—it is reduced to an exclusive Two Hundred now—for Tasker disliked Society and its artificiality and preferred to mix with the rank and file of humanity.

Nothing of particular interest happened in New York City during my first visit, so far as I can recollect; certainly nothing of a sensational nature, whereat Tasker was disappointed. One little incident, which at the time it occurred appealed to my sense of humour, comes back to me, so trivial that it is, perhaps, hardly worth recording.

We were staying at the Waldorf, where we had a suite, and he had often told his women friends to "pop in at any time." And so one morning while, each wrapped in only a blanket, we sat opposite each other breakfasting off pork chops and champagne cup, four girls, beautifully dressed and as pretty as flowers, were without warning shown into the room by our Hindu servant.

Their look of amazement when they saw us—or as much of us as protruded from the blankets—I shall never forget. Then of one accord all four became so convulsed with laughter that two of them grew hysterical, and Tasker, really alarmed, began to shout for help, afraid himself to move lest his blanket might slip off.

And so for a long time they remained, exhausted with laughter, while tears rolled down their cheeks. Tasker himself took it very philosophically. He hardly smiled, and, while offering them cigarettes, remarked calmly that if they chose to visit us at such an absurd hour they must take us as they found us—which certainly they had done.

A peculiarity of his which I have not mentioned was that though often he drank champagne cup at breakfast, never would he drink champagne during that meal. "It wouldn't be wholesome," he used to say. So he drank champagne cup during breakfast and began to drink champagne directly he had finished breakfast.

Those four girls—I have forgotten their names—were the most entertaining of all our friends in New York at that time. Well educated, they were surprised to find that we were not—at least not according to their high standard. They would express their views on people like the Young Pretender, and Piers Gaveston and John of Gaunt, and John Wilkes, and ask if we thought Titus Oates ought or ought not to have been flogged from Newgate to Tyburn, and what we thought of the man who said: "Let the lad win his spurs," and if it were really true that William the Conqueror introduced horse-shoes into England, and then go on to talk about the Roaring Forties, or Charlemagne, or the battle of Pondicherry, and express astonishment at our knowing little or nothing about Wordsworth's musings on Westminster Bridge and not even knowing that our Elephant and Castle was a corruption of *El Infanta La Castile*.

The reason they had come in that morning, however, was chiefly to ask Tasker all about the pedigree Agra diamond, and the model of the Holy City fashioned in gold and gems, and the famous Stafford collection of precious stones and other jewellery of his which they had read about in the New York newspapers a little while before. And he was able to enlighten them thoroughly, being no mean authority on precious stones and their histories, and not infrequently asked to give expert opinion by men who for years had been in the diamond trade.

One of his competitors in diamond-buying in after years was the ill-starred young Lord Anglesey. And here I should like to take the opportunity of saying that most of the unkind stories which were spread concerning Anglesey a year or two before his death were largely fictitious. He may have had vices, but he was, taken all in all, far more sinned against than sinning—all who knew him and are free from bias will bear me out in that. During the period when he entertained so lavishly the

newspapers made the most of what some of them called his Bacchanalian revels." But need they have blackened his character so thoroughly, have overlooked so completely the qualities which he possessed? Also because certain things were known about him publicly—the same things are known privately to-day about some of his traducers—the great body of our conventional community who had known him need not have turned their backs on him without giving him a chance to speak, in the way they did. Had they known the history of his ancestry and chosen to bear it in mind they would, I think, have shown more charity towards a young man of much ability who from early manhood had in his nature a great deal to contend against.

He died in the south of France. One cold, dreary afternoon happened to be at Victoria Station inquiring about some lost luggage, when an almost empty train steamed in. Presently amongst the goods dumped out of the vans on to the platform came a coffin, which was pushed on to a truck. Nobody had come to meet it. Apparently none knew whose it was, or exactly what was to be done with it.

"This 'ere corpse, Bill, what abaat it?" I heard one porter call out to another. "Ain't there no one in chawge?"

The porter addressed wetted a finger and turned over some consignment notes which he held in his other hand.

"It's the Mawquis of Anglesey's corpse," he said.

His mate grinned.

"S'elp me!" he exclaimed. "Wot, ther bloke wot died avin' a 'undred dressin'-gaaahns be'ind 'im?"

And that is probably all that a young man of great fortune, whose intellectual attainments were above the average, is remembered by to-day.

He goes down to Posterity and to Fame as—"The Man who owned a Hundred Dressing-gowns!"

CHAPTER FIVE

We stayed in several towns of no particular interest after leaving New York City, and then Tasker decided to go to Buffalo.

What happened on our arrival there is, I think, worth recording.

Though early Autumn, the weather was still sultry, and the four of us when travelling wore white flannel suits and straw boater hats. Tasker, his dark-skinned Hindu servant, his English servant and myself.

As you very likely know, when travelling by rail in the United States one need never personally look after one's heavy baggage. It is checked at the hotel or at the railway depot before one starts, one is given duplicate checks for the purpose of recovering the "pieces," and on arrival at one's destination the duplicate checks are handed to the hotel representative in attendance at the depot and the baggage turns up at the hotel. There is no shouting for porters or struggling to sort out trunks as is the case in this country at the principal railway termini.

Our train reached Buffalo between one and two in the morning. The depot was deserted. The air had become damp and raw. We had not booked rooms in advance, yet we looked forward to being soon inside a comfortable hotel, enjoying a meal of some sort. All at once the two servants came up to us, looking scared.

And no wonder. For owing to some blunder or to carelessness of the baggage checkers all our heavy baggage had been left on the New York Central express then disappearing in the darkness.

And our "hand" baggage. It consisted of two banjos in bright brown leather cases—Tasker played the banjo rather well and travelled always with these instruments; a long dumb-bell, weighing twenty pounds, a present years before from Elliot, the strong boy of Mottingham who had afterwards become the "Biceps King: Appearing Nightly"; a couple of hand cameras and a medicine chest.

Tasker took the mishap philosophically, and on his servants

rather unnecessarily confessing that they had slept in the train and declaring that, had they not done so, the misfortune would not have occurred, he suggested our going to an hotel in the hope of our being taken in without baggage—in the United States travellers without baggage are rarely admitted anywhere. He and I too had slept in the train.

"Can we have rooms, please?" he said to the clerk in the office, who, on our arrival, had been asleep in his chair. "Our baggage, unfortunately, has gone on on the train—here are our checks, you see," and he produced the set of duplicates.

The clerk took the checks, examined them, then looked at us suspiciously.

"We've had bluffers here 'fore now I guess," he said.

"But we are not bluffers," Tasker answered. "I'll pay you for the rooms now," and he put his hand into his breast pocket.

"Your friends?" the clerk inquired, looking the Hindu and then the white man up and down.

"My servants," Tasker answered, fumbling in his trousers pockets.

The clerk grinned. Then he strolled leisurely to the end of his barrier, thrust his head into a pigeon-hole, and called out:

"Mike, come right here. I've some cranks for you, I guess!"

We heard footsteps, and the youth called Mike joined him. Then they stared at us together with a look of great amusement.

"Well, what about the rooms?" Tasker said, his patience almost exhausted.

"Yep. And what about the dollars? Your 'servants' want ooms too, I guess!" and the two laughed in our faces.

Tasker controlled his irritation. Then, coming nearer, he told me in a whisper of the discovery he had made. While we were asleep his pockets had been picked. He had not a dollar on him.

"What's your charge for four rooms?" he asked.

"Four rooms!" the clerk exclaimed. "Not a *suite*—sure?" and he and Mike sniggered. "Now come along, boys," he went on. "No bluff—how many dollars have the lot of you got?"

between you? Then I'll see what I can do. Guess I'm not here to yarn with a troupe of acrobats - or are you minstrels (what?) and he looked again at the banjo cases, and the big dumb-bell, the dark Hindu and our white suits and straw hats.

Tasker laughed loudly. The clerk, at once upon his dignity became suddenly austere.

"You might pay for the rooms," Tasker said to me.

I felt in my pockets - coat, trousers, waistcoat. My money had been stolen too! I hadn't a dime. I turned to the servants

"One of you pay," I said, and the thought of Brasseys in *Charlie's Aunt* and the incident of the half-crown, flashed back into my mind.

Both men searched their pockets.

"Good God!" they exclaimed simultaneously. For they too had been robbed.

And then a dreadful thought came to us. It came to each and all at the same moment. Not only had the four of us been robbed of every dollar while we slept: in addition our baggage, containing some thousands of pounds, was even then being whirled miles away from us. And perhaps the baggage had been rifled! In any case for the moment we were penniless.

Meanwhile the clerk and his friend were watching us narrowly.

"Waal," drawled the former, "we're waiting, I guess."

It was then that Tasker had a brain-wave.

"We've no money," he said. "We were robbed while on the train. But you can hold this as security until to-morrow," and from his breast pocket he pulled out his enormous gold cigar case—it had his monogram set in rubies and diamonds surrounded by amethysts.

The case had been specially made for him and had cost £300.

He held it out to the clerk, and the electric light played upon the glittering gems.

The clerk took it and examined it closely. It seemed to fascinate him. Then he looked at us hard.

"Who are you, *anyway?*" he exclaimed, puzzled, but in a tone of deference.

speaking with the clerk's intonation. "Keep that until tomorrow, and we want the rooms right now. And I want a cable blank, please."

On the form he wrote: "Cable ten thousand pounds." Then he added his name, and the name of a bank which he knew had a branch in Buffalo. The cable he addressed to his London bank.

"How soon can that go off?" he asked, handing the form to the clerk.

The clerk read it, stared at us again, then handed it to Mike, who after reading it also stared. We felt like strange animals of some sort.

"In three hours' time, sir, it will go," the clerk said, suddenly polite.

The change in his manner astonished us, for in America hotel managers and others as a rule think little of a man because he happens to be rich. Some day, they think, they may be as rich themselves, or richer. Here in London it is different. You can insult anyone if you want to, and to your heart's content, if his station in life is lower than your own. Metaphorically you can jump on him and stamp upon his head, and if he knows you to be "rolling" and therefore likely to compensate him liberally afterwards he will take it all lying down. At least, that was so before the war. It probably is not so now because the war has to some extent increased men's self-respect.

Next morning there was quite a crowd in the hotel lounge waiting to see us go out. This puzzled us at first, but then we guessed the reason. News of that cable message had got noised about, and we had in consequence become objects of interest. When at lunch-time we returned, a crowd was waiting outside the hotel too.

On the following days came letters offering Tasker openings for investments which would yield enormous profits; letters from mine prospectors; letters from women offering to sell themselves; and of course begging letters. One of the newspapers contained a report of an interview with Tasker which had never taken place: "Young British Nobleman Travels in Buffalo."

During the afternoon the Buffalo bank notified us that £10,000 had been cabled from London, and we went to the bank, gave the password, "Brentwood," and drove back to the hotel with the money mostly in bills in a suit-case. On our arrival there we were told that our baggage had been recovered intact and would be delivered to us that evening.

But by then we had acquired unenviable notoriety.

"I'm going to change my name," Tasker said to me. "I'm tired of all this fuss wherever I go. From now onward I am 'Mr. Thomas,' remember that. You had better call me Jim."

Then he sent for his servants and told them that if either of them ever addressed him as Mr. "Tasker" again, even by accident, he would at once be dismissed. He told them, too, to re-pack all our baggage at once, as he meant to leave Buffalo in two hours' time.

And so from here onward Joseph Tasker becomes "James Thomas."

Curious how one adapts one's self to one's surroundings. Before becoming Thomas's companion I had never felt a great wish to travel: sport was the only thing I cared about. It had always seemed to me, too, that a man could accustom himself to live all his life in a village, without ever leaving it, and yet be happy; in the same way that he could acquire the habit of being always on the move and so never happy unless travelling. There was the case of a friend of mine who belonged to Boodle's—Sir Kenneth Howard—who prided himself on not having once slept out of London in thirty-five years, yet who was extremely well informed about all that was happening in the world, and apparently quite content. Most men who live always in London and rarely go out of it have a tendency to become, as you may have noticed, singularly narrow-minded. From being always in London they grow to think that London is the one spot in the world, that no other place counts, and that what does not originate in London must necessarily be bad, or only indifferently good—a curious hallucination. Nor had artificial excitement and sensational spectacles appealed to me much. Yet when I had been with Thomas less than a year I caught his craving for both these things. I, too, felt I needed excitement. I, too, wanted new scenes and new

sations just as he did. Also I had come to feel that life would not be bearable unless one were for ever moving, always availing from place to place, always "going on."

And so when the *wanderlust* cast its spell over him once more, was glad. He had then rented a private Pullman for an indefinite period, and two friends had joined us, also one more servant, also an excellent *chef* who with his assistant and the official in charge of the car made our full complement aboard the Pullman ten.

The arrangement with the railway people was that our car could be attached to any train we chose to select, on any system, at any time, to go anywhere. All that was necessary was that we should give the railway company twenty-four hours' notice, sometimes only twelve hours' notice, that we wanted to go to this or the other place. Thus if we wished to go to Detroit, or to Washington, or to Philadelphia, or to St. Louis, or to Cincinnati, or to any other city or even to any wayside town anywhere in the United States, we had merely to ring up the railway office, inquire what trains there were, and say where we wanted to go and to which train we would like our car to be connected. And the next day the train would hitch on our car.

"I see there is to be a big carnival in New Orleans next week," Thomas said to me one day; we were then in New York City. "We ought to see that. We will see it. You might ring up and say we'll go to New Orleans if possible to-morrow. We'll hook on to the express."

The New York--New Orleans express was then the fastest train running anywhere in the United States, though none of the American trains attained the speed of British trains, perhaps because they had to make much longer journeys. New Orleans lies about 1,400 miles south of New York City; yet Thomas thought no more of travelling 1,400 miles to see a carnival than he would have thought of going from London to Henley for the regatta.

American cities, if you except Boston and Washington and San Francisco and one or two more, are one so like another that when you have seen what they have to show in the way of general products, goods they specially manufacture, and so

on, interest in them ceases. But New Orleans is not like that. Historically and in other respects of exceptional interest, it is, perhaps, the most attractive city in the whole of the United States; at any rate it was the most attractive of the many cities we stayed in. Its population, too, is worth studying. No city in America has, I think, quite such a cosmopolitan and altogether remarkable population. Indeed there can hardly be a civilized country which is not represented there, and some of the uncivilized countries are represented too.

The carnival lasted four days and four nights, with music, dancing, feasting, every imaginable sort of revelry, until one became almost surfeited with it all. For fully a week Canal Street was given over entirely to merry-making, and little work was done. And the atmosphere of New Orleans seemed to suit the carnival spirit—a carnival more elaborately produced than any I have seen in any other part of the world, unless the amazing processions in Japan can be looked upon as carnivals.

Naturally the hotels were crowded, but with our luxurious car standing on its siding and in it our excellent *chef*, we were independent of hotels.

One of the most extraordinary spectacles we witnessed in New Orleans was its world-renowned establishment called Lulu White's, probably the most wonderfully appointed *bagnio* to be found in any city the world over. Places like the historic Charbonnet in Paris, and the notorious Number Nine of Yokohama, even the Yoshiwara, would bear no comparison with it; its complement of girls of almost all nationalities must have run into hundreds.

And yet directly the carnival was over and the town began to resume its workaday appearance, Thomas grew restless once more and said we must move on again. He wanted something new, some fresh excitement, something, he used to say, "that stirs one's blood!"

And before long he found what he wanted—found it in more ways than one.

From New Orleans we went by boat up the Mississippi to St. Louis, a delightful voyage which lasted several days. At St. Louis our Pullman awaited us, and, having "hooked on," we

went first to Kansas City and thence into Virginia, where the people were, if possible, more hospitable than the Americans of the other States we had stayed in. In some respects the people of Virginia differed from other Americans we met. Thus in the Northern and North-Eastern States everybody hustled all day and every day, and they talked always of dollars—anywhere, everywhere. In Virginia, Kentucky, Carolina, Georgia and Alabama nobody hustled. They carried on calmly, living from day to day as if there might be no tomorrow. If they made money, well and good. If they didn't—well, did it matter much? They seemed to be just as happy. That was the spirit, especially in Virginia, at any rate when we were there. And they spoke differently, too, those people of Virginia and Carolina and Georgia, with a soft, liquid, musical inflection of the voice most restful to the ear.

Thence we went to Cleveland, Cincinnati, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Omaha, Chicago—though not in the order named. Thomas, as I have said, never made plans, never mapped out any route. He would travel to a town a thousand miles away, come back to a town a hundred miles from the point whence we had started, then launch out again to some place beyond the town a thousand miles away. The Brown Palace was the principal hotel in Denver at that time, but we found the town so crowded with gold prospectors, news having spread of gold being found somewhere near, that we did not stay there long.

One evening in San Francisco, while we were sitting after dinner in the lounge of the Palace Hotel, Thomas stretched himself and yawned.

"I'm bored to death with this sort of life," he said. "Nothing exciting has happened since I don't know when. Let's come out and look about."

We had been twice round Chinatown in San Francisco with a man we had picked up—a public school boy he turned out to be, cousin of a well-known Scottish peer. He was one of those poor fellows—we met quite a lot from first to last—who, though good is in them, for one reason or another drift ever downward on the stream of life. Some Thomas helped financially. Others were past help. Noxious drugs of several sorts

could then be bought in Sacramento and San Francisco and certain other cities for a dime, or even less.

"Why not," said this guide of ours when we found him, "come and see the Tenderloin?"

The Tenderloin—very likely you have heard of it, maybe you have been there—is a quarter of San Francisco where a number of short, straight streets run parallel.

Its houses are all small, all much alike. Only after dark does the Tenderloin become busy. Then every house is lit inside, and in each, behind the Venetian blind—there are no shutters—sits a woman. In some houses two women sit together.

And all are good to look upon, more or less. All types are there—dark, fair, brunette, slim, buxom, tall, short. Every nation is represented. There are women of all colours. And each street has its special tariff. In the first we entered that night the tariff was a dollar—the lowest rate of any. We chatted with the dollar women, sad-eyed, most of them, pathetically anxious we should know that their tariff had not always been a dollar. Oh no, indeed not. One woman told us her tariff had once been twenty dollars. She was so proud of that! For years, she assured us, no man would have dared come near her with less than twenty dollars in his pocket. With self-satisfaction another described the comfort she had lived in for several years in the fifteen dollars street.

"And how are things now?" Thomas asked, interested.

She gave a bitter little laugh.

He got up.

"Take this," he said, pushing some bills into her hand.

"But say nothing to anybody."

She could not believe her eyes at first. Then she began to cry. Clutching his hand, she kissed it. Even her degradation had left her with a spark of gratitude.

Our guide took us along other streets in the Tenderloin. In each the tariff was higher than in the previous street. And as the tariff rose, so did the charms of the tenants of the lit-up little houses become more alluring, their surroundings richer and more garish. What horrible creatures we men are.

CHAPTER SIX

THERE was a place of amusement at that time on Market Street: a music-hall of sorts. The boxes had curtains which could be drawn across the front of them, thus concealing the occupants. Hidden away in a corner of each box was what looked like a wine-funnel, sunk into the floor. These funnels, meant to be concealed, we did not notice until our attention was drawn to them by our companion on the night we went on to the ----- after our visit to the Tenderloin.

Several times we had been astonished at the number of bottles of wine, and the quantity of drink generally, which our casual acquaintances had apparently been able to consume while with us in those boxes. And now our guide revealed the secret to us. For those funnels were waste pipes arranged to receive liquor surreptitiously poured into them by the harpies for whom it had been bought, and on the sale of which they, of course, received commission. It was even said that liquor thus thrown away ran into a vessel down below, and was there re-bottled and sold over again. But as nobody, surely, would buy a concoction made up of brandy and whisky, of cocktails of many sorts, of red wine, of white wine, of champagne, of liqueurs, of, in short, almost every alcoholic compound, we did not believe that story.

It so happened that that night two rather well-known pugilists chanced to meet in a box facing ours, on the opposite side of the stage. We heard them after a while begin to exchange high words, and then all at once one of them jumped up, seized the other round the middle, and coolly "emptied" him over the front of the box so that he fell with a crash into the orchestra beneath.

A roar of laughter shook the house—the orchestra did not relish the joke—and when, bruised and bleeding, the victim scrambled to his feet, he looked like an enraged tiger about to spring at somebody. Then, bounding out of the *débris* he had created, he rushed up into the box once more, panting for his assailant's blood. But when he got there the box was empty.

Nothing more happened that evening, but some days later we heard that the insulted fighter, thirsting still for revenge

was chasing his assailant from town to town in a frantic endeavour to meet him face to face.

And then, one night, we were told that the two had met. It was Abington Baird who told us. He said that particulars had just reached him. But the pursuer had not, it seemed, wreaked his vengeance then and there. Scanting big money if a fight with this tale of vengeance behind it were to take place, he had instead challenged his assailant. And the challenge had, of course, been accepted.

"The fight will take place in Arizona," Baird added. "You ought to go and see it."

And Thomas said he would.

When a fortnight later we arrived at the out-of-the-way spot which had been selected for the encounter, a big circular stand made of wood was still in course of erection. We were told that it would accommodate eight thousand spectators.

The afternoon arrived at last, and the stand was packed. A description of the fight would not be of interest here, but never in my life had I seen such a wild, disorderly, apparently half-mad crowd. It was divided into two factions, and the cheering and the booing which had begun from the moment the combatants had entered the ring continued to increase in volume throughout the opening rounds.

And then gradually one felt the atmosphere becoming tense with a prescience of catastrophe.

"They'll rush the ring if he's beaten this round—and then God help the referee!" I heard Baird say, who was just behind us.

His forecast proved correct.

The fighter referred to did not win the next round.

"Time" had just been called, and the men were coming out of their corners, when several dozen toughs jumped out of their seats and scrambled on to the roped platform. At once others followed. Then adherents of the opposite faction, seeing what was going to happen, rushed to defend their champion. Instantly the fury and hatred of both factions, until then held in check, broke loose. In less than a minute the ring had been rushed and the place was a pandemonium.

Men fought and struggled—some to attack members of the opposing faction; some in vain attempts to restore order; some

to escape out of the stand. And all the while terrified women screamed and became hysterical.

Then it was that above the roaring of the seething, maddened mob there came a dreadful sound—a loud, ominous crack, followed a moment later by another.

I heard Baird call out: "Good God! The stand's collapsing!"

Followed a wild stampede in which men and women fought for every exit. But already the structure swayed. It swayed again. Then gradually, with a "crunching" sound increasing in volume, one half of the whole structure collapsed, burying hundreds in its *débris*, maiming many, killing some, and creating a panic such as I hope never to see again.

You would have thought such a calamity would have sobered everybody. It didn't. While frantic men trampled on one another, and women, screeching for help, were being squeezed to death, hundreds fought and struggled still—adherents of the opposing factions. But the principals, their seconds, the ring attendants, all had disappeared, engulfed in that human vortex.

The section of the stand on which we stood remained firm.

Turning, I looked for Thomas, for Baird, for the rest of our companions. Nowhere could I see them. The cries of the injured were heart-rending still. Yet close to me betting men were bellowing at each other about some payment or non-payment.

I happened to look upward. Feet above my head, on a bit of crazy scaffolding, Thomas stood. In his hands he held his camera, while he balanced himself without support. He was focusing the scene of turmoil down below. I saw that at any moment the scaffolding might give way, and instinctively I shouted. But amid that pandemonium of course he could not hear. And then I, too, was swept off my feet and borne along on that rushing, half-mad torrent of humanity.

I did not meet him until hours later.

"Have you heard the news?" he said carelessly, lighting a cigar.

"What news?" I asked.

"About the fight. Both men are dead, and bets are off. I got some splendid photographs!"

Worth seeing at that time were the falls of Niagara. They are hardly worth seeing now.

We stayed at a picturesque hotel there, the Clifton House, afterwards burnt down. To-day an ugly, ultra-modern building occupies the site—luxurious, certainly; comfortable, no doubt; yet out of keeping with the picture.

The first time I saw Niagara there was a ruggedness about it still, though already an attempt was being made to "improve" the ruggedness away. Now the only natural "feature" left is the roaring of the water. It sounds like a storm at sea.

I was last at Niagara just before the war. Dye works, presumably, had stained the water strange colours. Mammoth advertisements stood out in all directions—glaring, hideous. Formerly to explore under the Falls one clambered down little foot-paths, one scrambled over slippery rocks. Now you line up in a queue, you buy a ticket at a booking-office, you are pushed into a lift with a crowd—and you descend. And you return in the same manner.

"Where only Man is vile!"

It was while seated in the then primitive little theatre in Niagara village that we were approached by a woolly-headed negro. He had sold programmes before the curtain rose, and now he came into our box. After nodding familiarly and wishing us good-evening he drew up a chair, struck a match on the seat of his trousers, lit a green cigar, and sat down between us. And then he began to talk.

He did not mean to be rude. For that matter he was not rude. He thought it was the friendly and gracious thing to do, and we did not disillusion him. Not until he suggested submitting for our approval "two smart, prime girls, sah," did we think it time to hint to him that he should go out and bowl his hoop.

And so from town to town we went, still in the private Pullman, as the Wandering Jew might have travelled had he lived in modern times.

We had looked forward to ending in Salt Lake City some-
 where

Mormons in the streets, Mormon Elders too, possibly Mormon wives. We saw nothing of the sort—but we saw the Mormon Temple. Questions regarding the Mormons evoked only smiles of amusement. Where are the Salt Lake City Mormons? What becomes of them when they are at home? Where do they hide themselves? Or can it be that these immoral and atrocious acts which we read so much about are fiction and nothing more? Money, as I have said, opens all doors in London, and in other places too, but in Salt Lake City it opened no doors at all. Or perhaps there were not any doors to open.

There was "nothing in it, sure," we were told again and again. It is said that every man has his price, and had there been much to see of a secret nature in Salt Lake City, I cannot help thinking that Thomas's promise of generous largesse would sooner or later have brought such secrets to the surface.

It was while staying in San Francisco that we had rather an amusing experience. At least it amused me. I don't think it can have amused Thomas very much.

There were in the X Hotel at that time a number of very large, solid silver tankards; they must have held at least a quart.

Talking to the head bar-tender, Thomas said one day:

"I wonder none of those silver tankards is ever stolen."

"Guess he'd be a cute guy who stole one, anyhow," the bartender answered dryly.

"Guess I'd steal one if I wanted to," Thomas said.

"Guess not," the man replied.

"Would you like to bet about it?"

"Sure."

"Then I'll lay you two hundred dollars to fifty dollars I get one out of the hotel without your knowing it or being able to stop me."

The bar-tender looked at him keenly.

"That a do?" he asked.

"Fair do's," Thomas answered.

"Then it's a bet, *sir*."

And so it was set down in writing. Thomas laid the bartender two hundred dollars to fifty that within seven days would have smuggled one of the big silver tankards out of

hotel. He was to be at liberty to employ any means he might choose to get it out, but was not to throw one into the street, or to damage one in any way. The bar-tender, on his side, could employ any means he chose to prevent any one of the tankards from being taken out of the hotel, short of hiding it in the hotel or locking it up. That was on a Saturday. The seven days were to start at twelve noon on the following Monday.

Of course long before the Monday morning everyone in the hotel had heard about the wager. The bar-tender warned the entire hotel staff that on no account must they allow anybody whomsoever to take a tankard out of the hotel, on any pretext whatsoever. If at twelve noon a week later any single tankard was found to be missing—well, there would be trouble, he said. If the hotel manager heard about the wager, as he must have, he kept his counsel, for he said nothing.

Then Thomas set to work. He had recourse to all sorts of ruses. He hid a tankard in the middle of his dirty linen in a bag to be taken to the laundry, but it was discovered. If he, or either of his servants, appeared with a suit-case near any of the hotel exits, the suit-case was pounced on by laughing negro members of the staff, opened and searched. There was great excitement when a bucket of linseed gruel about to be carried out to the stables was found to contain a submerged silver tankard.

So six days passed. Sunday arrived, and we were beginning to think that the bar-tender would win, when, as we stood waiting for a lift to come down, Thomas, who was near the lift shaft, happened to look up it. Directly afterwards he came over to me, slipped his arm through mine, and walked me away along the corridor.

"I've got the idea," he said. But he did not say what the idea was. He asked me, however, to meet him that night near the smoking-room on the top storey of the hotel at ten minutes to one.

The last lift for the night left the top floor always punctually at one o'clock. It was the lift attendant's habit to walk along the corridor to the smoking-room at the end of it to ask if any guests wanted to go down. Generally, when he did so, he left

the lift gate unfastened. And not infrequently a guest would offer him a drink.

I met Thomas at the time appointed. The corridor was empty.

"Wait in the smoking-room," he said quietly. "When the lift attendant comes along—talk to him, offer him a drink, do anything to detain him."

That I did. I detained him for fully five minutes. Then Thomas strolled in. The attendant grinned.

"Got the tankard out yet?" he asked.

The hotel staff, we knew, had been betting amongst themselves on the result of Thomas's wager.

"Time enough yet," Thomas answered lightly.

The man looked up at the clock.

"Yes, eleven hours more. And it's time for me to go," he added, rising. "Anybody going down?"

We went down with him to the ground floor.

"Come," Thomas said to me a minute later. "I'm going out for a breath of air."

In the street he said:

"I've won, I think. Come. I'll show you."

He turned into a street which skirted the back of the hotel, and went a little way along it. At a flight of stone steps he topped.

"Follow me," he said.

At the foot of the steps was a door. He pushed it open, produced from his pocket a small electric torch, and shone a light in the darkness.

In front of us was a lift—at rest; deserted for the night. It rested, not on the concrete floor, but on four concrete blocks, each several feet high.

"The lift we came down in," he murmured.

He went over to it, scrambled underneath, and in a minute reappeared with a bulky paper parcel.

"I hitched it on to the hook under the lift," he said, "while you were talking with the man. Out of here—quick!"

When punctually at noon that day the silver tankards were paraded, one was found to be missing. The bar-tender was

Thomas drove him to a house half-a-mile away. There stood the Hindu awaiting him with the tankard!

Only one newspaper got hold of the story. It tried to make out that a rich young Englishman had tried to steal a silver tankard out of the X Hotel!

Twice during the first two years of our wanderings we returned to England, but Thomas was growing more and more restless. Kipling's lines seemed sometimes to apply to him:

A Fool there was and his goods he spent
(Even as you and I)

Honour and Faith, and sure intent
(And it wasn't the least what the lady meant);

But a fool must follow his natural bent
(Even as you and I)

And yet I don't mean to imply that Thomas was a fool, for in many respects he certainly was not.

CHAPTER SEVEN

We were in Buenos Aires for the second time when we met Gabriel Vincent—I give him this fictitious name. We became acquainted with him whilst dining at, I think, Monsch's famous restaurant; he had spilled a glass of wine over the cloth, and apologized to us profusely. Soon he became very friendly with us, and in a little while we met him almost daily. He had told us that his name was Gabriel Vincent, but had said nothing else about himself. Whether he had relatives or friends, to this day I don't know. Certainly he was one of the handsomest and altogether most fascinating young men we had met in the course of our travels. Cultured, a gentleman, a scholar and a fluent linguist, he was travelling for amusement, he told us. He appeared to be a man of fortune, and from his conversation it became obvious that he had seen a good deal of the world.

But we found out before long that he had a failing. It was a failing which with him amounted almost to a mania.

"Do women appeal to you much?" he said one day. And when Thomas shrugged his shoulders instead of answering, Vincent laughed.

He had a strangely musical laugh.

One night he left us early. He had an appointment, he said. Of late he seemed to have a good many appointments. When first we had met him he had been in the habit of spending whole evenings alone, reading and sometimes writing. Afterwards he had spent evenings with us. Once or twice we wondered who or what it was he now so often had to see; but it was no concern of ours, so we didn't think much about it.

Some weeks had passed, and we were still in Buenos Aires, the city of beautiful women as well as of beautiful airs—the three of us had returned from Valparaíso, where we had spent a fortnight together. Thomas and I were now staying in an hotel which was different from most of the hotels—unfashionable, cosmopolitan. It was quite a small place, managed by a Frenchman and his wife, and conducted on French lines. The majority of the guests, too, were French.

We had seen Vincent even less often since our return from Valparaíso, and each time it had struck us that somehow he was changing. Indeed, a very noticeable change had begun to come over him. And the reason, knowing him as we then did, we were able approximately to guess.

"Probably," Thomas said, "he is going through a phase. He will soon become disgusted with it all."

We had been out late one night, and day was dawning as we strolled slowly homeward from the Club de Residentes Extranjeros. We had turned into a side street to take a short cut to our hotel, when the door of a house a few yards ahead of us opened and a man in evening clothes stumbled out on to the pavement, the door closing after him automatically with a dull thud. At once we recognized Vincent. He looked ill and dishevelled. At first we thought he had been drinking, though we never had known him to be the worse for wine. Then we saw we were mistaken. He was under some influence, but not the influence of drink. It might have been some drug, for at once his eyes had an unnatural brilliance and his lips twitched oddly—both after-effects of certain potent drugs.

He had not noticed us, and he looked up at the windows of the house he had just left. The blinds were nearly all drawn down, and the lights in the rooms were being switched out one by one. As we followed his gaze, a tall, graceful woman with an abundance of fair hair reaching to her waist stood motionless before the last window on the first floor. Her face I shall never forget. It was lovely—yet revolting. It was attractive—yet terrible. It was a face which could have been described as "horribly beautiful." The features were perfect. The expression was a devil's. Cruelty and lust, hatred and love, passion and cunning, all were indicated. And more than that was indicated. Never before had I seen vice portrayed on a human countenance, never since have I seen it, as it was stamped on that woman's. And though the eyes were human enough, they were eyes of a curious kind—the eyes of an effect, the eyes of a punk. They were strangely striking eyes, and Vincent, gazing up from the street, limply waved his hand. Almost as he did so the venetian blind was pulled down and the woman seen no more.

Even then he did not see us in the grey light, but we quickly overtook him as he slouched away—a slouch quite unlike his habitually alert gait.

Thomas touched him on the shoulder and he spun round. On seeing Thomas he instantly hit him a blow in the face which sent him staggering up against me. By the time he had recovered, Gabriel Vincent had disappeared and the street was deserted.

We saw him in a place of amusement a few nights later. He was alone. He waved his hand at us, indicating at the same time some vacant chairs at the table where he was seated. Thomas had meant not to speak to him, but he changed his mind and we went over to him.

"You two seem rather strange to-night, a bit cold in your manner," Vincent said, looking at each of us in turn. "Is anything the matter? Have I offended you in any way?"

"You may not think it an offence to punch a friend in the eye without provocation," Thomas answered, astonished at the question. "Is that you mad or what?"

"I don't understand; I don't know what you are talking about," Vincent exclaimed, knitting his brow. "I never struck you! Why should I strike you?"

"You never——"

Thomas stared at him.

"Oh, you must be loopy," he said, annoyed. "Then tell me who gave me this black eye?"

"How on earth should I know? I've not seen you for some days."

"And in a few days you forget having all but knocked me down!"

Vincent's expression gradually changed. A look of unutterable weariness came into his face. The skin around his eyes, I then noticed, had a curious, bluish tint. He leant towards Thomas and asked under his breath and in a tone of real anxiety:

"Tell me what you mean by saying I struck you. When did I strike you and where? Do explain. Something has been amiss with my memory lately, with my faculties generally."

And so Thomas, still incredulous, told him in a few words what had happened. While he was doing so I watched Vincent's face. It looked more and more haggard.

"My dear fellow, I apologize," he exclaimed, when Thomas had finished. "I apologize most profoundly. You know, you must know, I would not intentionally have hit you like that for no reason, especially in such a mean and treacherous way. What can have made me do it? I wonder what made me do it. Will you believe me when I give you my word that I have no recollection at all even of coming out of that house? Though I remember going in there. That's the truth, Thomas, and there is nothing else I can say. Nor can I explain what unconscious impulse made me hit you. Come over to my hotel. I have a sitting-room there where we can talk freely."

We went with him to his hotel, the Plaza, and his man, after producing cognac and cigars, discreetly vanished.

We had been seated talking for a few minutes when Vincent suddenly said:

"That woman has me in her power—wholly—absolutely. Nothing now can keep me from her. She seems to have grown

upon me, to have cast some sort of spell over me. I love her and yet I hate her. But I can't resist her."

"When did you meet her first, and where?" Thomas asked. "Some weeks ago. I went into that house one night at hazard--and there I met her. Directly I set eyes on her I experienced an extraordinary sensation which I can't in the least explain. She is French, but her mother was Circassian."

"Did she ever give you anything that might have made you lose your memory?"

"I don't know. Every time she gives me something: injects it with a hypodermic syringe. I don't know what it is, but while the effects last--oh, my God!"

For an instant he paused.

"And every time I want it more--and every time it seems to make me love her more--but it's horrible all the same."

"Can't you fight against its effects?" Thomas said. "Can't you keep away from her, never go near that house again? Why not leave Buenos Aires, and come north with us? We are leaving soon, you know."

He seemed to shudder at the thought.

"I can't," he answered. "And if I could, I wouldn't."

He was silent, staring straight before him.

"She is a devil," he exclaimed at last. "And yet I love her. And yet I hate her. And yet I can't escape from her."

He seemed to be quite unmoved. Perspiration was on his brow. He reached for a glass and drank some cognac neat.

We waited without speaking.

"Shall I tell you more?" he said.

"As you please," Thomas answered carelessly, blowing a cloud of smoke. He was eager to hear more, I could see, yet anxious not to seem to want to pry into Vincent's secrets.

Vincent put his hand out slowly and laid it on Thomas's. Then he looked each of us in the eyes in turn, as if debating.

"The night you saw me," he said, "she made me make a promise. I made it of my own will, and yet against my will--against my better understanding. I feel I am contemptible--despicable."

"I want you," she said to me. "I will give you greater rapture than you have ever enjoyed in life before--greater joy

still in death.' She smiled as she said 'death,' and I thought her at that moment more than ever ravishingly beautiful. I put out my hand and smoothed her perfumed hair. I wound my arm about her neck and she passionately kissed my lips. In the ecstasy of those moments I would have died for her; more, I would have damned my soul for her—and I told her so.

"She smiled again then. She laughed—a soft, musical laugh: I can hear it now. And then she gazed into my eyes and kissed me again and gently laid her head down on my shoulder.

" 'Would you give your life for me?' she murmured into my ear.

" 'I have said I would!' I told her.

" 'And do as I ask? All I ask?'

" 'You know it!' I exclaimed.

" 'And your soul—would you wreck your soul for me—for ever and ever—beyond all chance of revokement?'

"She seemed to breathe more quickly as she asked that, yet I answered:

" 'I will do anything and everything you want me to do,' for I was beside myself, as I am now, as I always shall be. 'I will give my life, my soul, my——'

"I fancied she gave a sort of triumphant sob, and then she whispered with an extraordinary intensity of emotion:

" 'Then you are mine—mine, and I am yours—now—for ever—for all time!'

"What followed I can't describe."

He had been growing more and more excited while he talked, and was so terribly in earnest that the whole affair seemed unnatural—almost uncanny. Then all at once he sprang up.

"I must go," he said hurriedly. "I must go to her now—she wants me—I feel that she is wanting me!"

Rather wildly he looked about him as if seeking something. Thomas asked him what he had lost.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, not heeding, "I feel it on me now! I feel it in my body! I feel it in my blood—in my brain—my bones—my very being! I am going to *live* during the time I have to live! I am going to live in sin, in vice, in joy, in

was trying to calm him, trying to restrain him. Then, snatching up his hat, which was what he had been looking for, he turned and rushed out of the room like a madman.

We heard him hurry down the stairs.

We heard the porter, awakened from his sleep, unlock the big iron gate, then shut it with a clatter.

About noon on the following day as we passed along Calle Bartolomé-Mitré we saw a little crowd gathered outside a house down a side street and staring up at its windows. On the instant we both recognized the house. It was the house we had seen Gabriel Vincent stumble out of soon after dawn some days before.

"What are they staring at?" Thomas inquired of a bystander.

The bystander was a Frenchman.

"*Un Anglais inconnu*," he said, "has been found dead in there. You know the sort of place—*hein?*"

He grinned.

Some instinct told us at once that the dead man was Gabriel Vincent. Later in the day we found that we had not been mistaken.

Poor Vincent. Who was he? Who were his relatives and his friends? Where did he come from? We tried to find out, but the man was a mystery. Perhaps the name he had given us was not his true name. His valet knew nothing—or said he knew nothing. He said that Vincent had engaged him in Cuba, where he, the valet, belonged, and that he had been with him only a few months.

Before going to Buenos Aires we had read and been told all sorts of beautiful things about the city of good airs. Buenos Aires was Paris over again, only a better and a finer Paris, a more modern and in every way more desirable Paris—"Paris only much more so" was one of the definitions. Its *avenidas* were the finest in the world. Its *plazas* had no rivals. Its streets were things of pure artistic joy. Its shops and its commercial houses contained the best of everything. All its buildings were architectural *chefs-d'œuvre*. These and many more things we had been assured, so that when we arrived in the city for the first time we were disillusioned and disappointed.

to specifications." It has wide *avenidas* and *plazas*, but none is finer than the avenues and open spaces to be found in plenty of other cities—in Washington, for instance, and in Boston, to name two in the United States alone, while in many European capitals the architectural beauties of Buenos Aires, such as they are, are easily excelled. Even the so-called fashionable streets, such streets as Calle Cangallo, Calle Sarmiento, Calle San Martin, Calle Florida—where Harrod's Stores now are—Calle Bartolomé-Mitré, Calle Maipú and others are little more than back streets in reality, the majority badly paved, some no wider than Chancery Lane. Then the Casa Rosada, the official home of the President, which we had heard so much about, proved on close inspection to be merely stucco, and so were other "imposing" buildings. Buenos Aires is, in short, a city merely of shams—or at any rate it used to be.

We had heard it spoken of, too, as the "horses and mules hell," and that certainly with good reason. In no other city that I have been in, even in countries like Spain and Italy, have I seen animals treated with such abominable cruelty and callous brutality. The *cocheros* or drivers take apparently keen delight in lashing their wretched horses from the time they begin to move until they stop moving, though all the while the animals are doing their best to crawl along despite their wounds and open sores which, when the harness stops rubbing the bleeding skin, become at once covered with flies. Sights of that sort used to make us "see red," yet protests to the authorities were met merely with shrugs and the *que voulez-vous?* attitude. Indeed, on one occasion Thomas barely escaped being locked up for striking a man he saw hitting a horse with a club and then kicking it in the belly.

The city has one redeeming feature—the loveliness of its women, though they belong almost all to one type, the dark, Spanish type, with flashing eyes and perfect teeth. Women with fair hair one sees comparatively rarely. And in the hotels, in the restaurants, in the streets, everybody stares—stares so hard and so long at anybody and everybody not obviously city born that one feels at first quite embarrassed. It is not their intention to be rude. Probably half the time

stare they hardly see the person they are staring at. It is a habit, nothing more. And everywhere the streets are crowded with a cosmopolitan population—Turks and Greeks, Swedes and Syrians and Italians and people of several other nationalities. The bestial Pasco quarter is, I think, the most degraded quarter of its kind that we came across in any city; and Thomas always made such quarters one of his special studies. By contrast, the beautiful *estancias* within reach of the city are models of all that farms ought to be in appointment, modernity and cleanliness.

Canton, Shanghai, Hankow, Fu Chow, in fact all the towns in China in which we stayed were interesting, for throughout the Celestial Empire there seems to dwell an indescribable "atmosphere" of mystery, of illimitable antiquity. During all the months we travelled there, mostly off the beaten track, mixing largely with the native population, we seemed to feel that beneath those expressionless countenances and underlying that servile manner some great, some serious, some irresistible force worked all the while—plotting, planning, preparing, who shall say for what?

CHAPTER EIGHT

SIR ROBERT HART, of whom we saw a good deal, afforded us special facilities for travel, and gave us introductions to influential Chinamen. Indeed, but for those introductions we probably should have seen much less of China from within than from first to last we did see.

And of all the cities I have been in, not in China only, but in other parts of the world, none, I think, gave rise to the curious feeling we both experienced as together we passed through the broad gateway in the massive stone wall which for centuries has surrounded Peking. The sensation was most strange: it was weird, and dispiriting, and depressing, as if one were quitting for ever the world one had formerly lived in and grown so accustomed to.

kinsfolk and acquaintances, all the things one had cared for, all the people and creatures one had ever known.

And everywhere, all day, every day, that same strange "atmosphere," that feeling of unknown forces working—sinister, mysterious. Sir Edward Seymour, in Pekin at that time, told us that many foreigners experience on their first arrival that same sensation, and that even some of the residents are not wholly free from it.

Pekin! How can one adequately describe that strangest of strange cities? Thanks to Sir Robert Hart we were enabled to behold a good deal more of Pekin, excepting the Forbidden City, than most foreigners are, I imagine, privileged to see. It was Pekin by night, however, which produced upon us both the oddest effect of all—Pekin "lit" only by the fitful flicker of evil-smelling oil-lamps, with unpaved streets cut by ruts in all directions and with stagnant open drains; streets cramped and narrow and twisting in an endless maze amid acres of low-roofed, wooden bungalows constructed all in the Chinese style, which in reality is no style.

Imagine, if you can, that mass of tortuous streets shrouded in darkness almost complete, while scores of figures move phantom-like, glide noiselessly, stealthily between those darkened houses, at times stopping to peer furtively into the face of some passer-by whom they see to be different from themselves, and revealing for an instant glittering eyes deep-set in yellow faces stamped with hatred and inborn lust.

That is Pekin, the true Pekin by night. That is the Pekin in which intrigues are for ever hatching—the Pekin which, soon after we had been there, rose with the intention of slaying every foreigner on sight. And how, had that rebellion not been crushed, would most of those foreigners have been put to death? By methods which, were I to describe them, no reader could bear to think about.

Readers of these recollections know probably that at one time the looting of temples, sometimes even the desecrating of graves, was extensively done in Pekin by some of the white races. The worst offenders, we were told, were always Germans, though representatives of other nations, including some of our own countrymen, were not wholly blameless.

"And you know those are crimes," one of our informants said, "which the Chinese not merely deeply resent: they never forget them. Twenty years, fifty years, a hundred years, two or three hundred years may go by, and the story is handed down from generation to generation, it remains deep-rooted, it rankles more and more until the time arrives when the crimes are avenged, often in a terrible manner."

Yet Sir Robert Hart, who then had lived already twenty or more years amongst the Chinese, and was perhaps the one Englishman whom the Chinese understood thoroughly and really respected, several times assured us when we questioned him on the subject that the possibility of the Yellow Peril ever maturing was a figment of foreigners' imagination. He declared that China could never rise, even if it wanted to, until the various provinces stopped quarrelling amongst themselves and looking upon each other with enmity.

"And that they will never do," I remember his declaring with emphasis. "Interior enmity in China has obtained as far back as Chinese history carries us, and is as bitter now as it ever was—if possible bitterer than it ever was."

Yet foreigners resident in China do not all hold that view. Many maintain that as time goes on the Chinese, being a practical and highly intelligent and in many ways an extremely civilized race, will come to realize the futility of these internal petty enmities, and that one day they will combine in a colossal attempt to overthrow the power of the other hemisphere.

The pidgin English talked everywhere in China was not devoid of humour. I remember our calling at an hotel to ask if we could see two sisters who were living there. Came the reply:

"Two piecee girlee no can see: number one piecee girlee top-side makee washee-washee; number two piecee girlee go outside makee walkee-walkee."

Which translated means that one of the sisters was up-stairs in her bath and that the other had gone out for a walk.

When I had known Mark Twain in Paris he had more than once spoken to me about Honolulu.

Isles. "Hawaii—the most beautiful spot in the whole world," had been one of his favourite phrases at a time when I had no reason to suppose I should ever go there. Indeed, to such an extent had Clemens enthused about the islands that I had gradually come to think that his vivid imagination must have got the better of him to some extent.

And then one day, only a few years afterwards, I found myself with Thomas in Honolulu. And before I had been there many hours I began to realize that what Mark Twain had told me had in no way been exaggeration, that his descriptions had been literally true.

Conjure up in your imagination a group of mountainous volcanic islands, the largest ninety miles in length by about seventy-five in breadth, lying in the very middle of the Pacific, and nearly two thousand miles from the nearest mainland—America or Japan. Think of such a spot, then fill into the picture on the north and the south, the east and the west, the loveliest of landscapes you have ever seen or imagined, landscapes one more gorgeous than another. Go on then to see before you mentally a land where the sky is always blue; where the sun is always shining; where the open sea out beyond the white-crested surf is always smooth as glass; where the air is always warm yet never sultry; where ocean bathing can be enjoyed day and night at all seasons and from year's end to year's end—a land where there are no fogs, no frosts, no sun-strokes, no fevers, no sandstorms, no typhoons, no hurricanes, no tidal waves, no wild beasts, no reptiles, no poisons, no beggars, where everybody is happy and light-hearted and nobody is ever morose, and where it is (or rather was) possible to live on the equivalent of a few shillings a day.

That sounds like Paradise. And to say it is an earthly paradise comes very near the truth. Certainly the memory of those glorious sun-streaked scenic panoramas, of the ever green and ever brilliant tropical vegetation, of those jungle-covered shores contrasting so strangely with the distant mountain peaks, remains with me and I think will remain always.

All night through and every night in the year one could,

if one liked, sleep beneath the stars—we slept thus on many nights. I have said that living was cheap. Bananas, pine-apples, breadfruit, lychee nuts, alligator pears, coconuts, mangoes and other tropical fruit grow almost everywhere in abundance and cost next to nothing, while large red strawberries remain ripe all the year round, and as for clothes—a couple of suits of white duck costing less than three dollars a suit sufficed for all necessary requirements.

It was after I had known Mark Twain and had listened, sometimes rather wearily, to his oft-uttered panegyrics concerning the Sandwich Isles that he wrote me a long letter which contained the following passage:

"... And of all the lands I have visited in my lifetime none in all the world has any deep, strong charm for me but those Islands of Hawaii, no other land could so longingly and beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and waking, through more than half a lifetime. Other things leave me, but it abides. Other things change, but it remains the same. For me its balmy airs are always blowing; its summer seas are ever flashing in the sun; the pulsing of its surf-beat is ever in my ear. I can see its garlanded crags; its leaping cascades; its plummy palms bowing by the shore; its remote summits floating like islands above the cloud rack. I can feel still the spirit of its woodland solitude and hear the plash of its many brooks. In my nostrils still lives the breath of its flowers that perished years and years ago."

There was no ocean cable when we were there, nor were there petrol-driven cars. Ramshackle four-wheelers plied for hire, driven by coloured jehus, and followed, when one had luggage, by cab-runners so scantily clad that in London they would at once have been arrested.

It was on an evening soon after our arrival in Honolulu that we first chartered a four-wheeler there. At the Hawaiian Hotel, where we were staying, we told the driver to wait, for we meant after dinner to drive through the palm groves in the moonlight. But after dinner we forgot all about the palm groves, and all about the waiting vehicle, so that it was not until we went out again on the evening of the following day that we noticed our four-wheeler waiting still.

At once the jehu clambered off his perch and came up to us, grinning broadly. And no wonder he grinned, for his legal fare, he assured us—and quite correctly—was over twenty dollars, a little over four pounds; he had waited twenty hours at one dollar an hour. Had he waited eighty hours, or one hundred hours, or until his horse had starved to death, his legal fare would still have been one dollar an hour for the whole time he had waited.

Our one and only trial in Hawaii was the mosquito curse. To get rest at night either indoors or out of doors without mosquito nets was impossible. Then one day Thomas had a brain-wave. He smeared his face and neck and hands with vaseline, and in a short time was asleep. He looked like a fly-paper next morning when he awoke, but mosquito bites there was none, and with a paper-cutter he calmly scraped all the dead mosquitoes off the exposed parts of his body. And every night, from then onward, we captured our assailants by that means by the score.

"What puzzles me," he used to say, "is how human beings got here in the first instance, seeing that we are fifteen hundred or more miles from the nearest land," a problem which, I suppose, none will ever solve, though there are several theories.

But the two months in the islands proved enough for both of us. Hawaii, with its many advantages and all its natural charms, becomes monotonous after a while.

We embarked for Yokohama.

CHAPTER NINE

A LOT of young Americans came aboard with us that time. They were making a world tour before settling down to work. At the same time there also came on board a man whom I will call Peter Blank, and his wife.

Nowhere, I think, do you meet so varied and interesting

We had been a week or more at sea, and the passengers were all becoming intimate, when the weather began to change.

At least it didn't exactly change. The air became strangely still, the sea as smooth as oil. Then gradually the sky changed to a curious hue—it looked the colour of lead.

By sundown a sense of oppression had settled upon us all. The captain, the officers, even the Chinese crew, had all at once grown plumb. And then a whisper spread. There were hints at a coming storm. I heard the word "typhoon" spoken once or twice.

In the smoking-room there was brave talk. The young Americans talked "big." If a typhoon struck us, some of them said, and if the worst came to the worst, and if the ship began to sink—well, they could die only once, and they would die "game"; oh yes, die laughing and drinking and shouting obscene songs!

A gust of wind whistled shrilly in the rigging. The ship until then sailing smoothly, gave a slight lurch. A second gust struck her. Several of the Chinese crew came scuttling along the deck.

I noticed their frightened looks as they peered out across the ocean. Then they began to pitch handfuls of slips of papers over the ship's side. Those slips I knew to be prayers—in Japan I was to see worshippers outside the temples chewing up slips like those, then spitting them at a god set on a pedestal and surrounded by wire netting. If the chewed paper passed through the netting, hit the god and stuck to it, the prayer had been heard. If it did not stick, or if it stuck on the wire netting, the prayer had not been heard and the worshipper would chew and expectorate again in the hope of that time being more successful. And so he would continue praying until the god heard him. There are Europeans who speak slightly of the superstitions of the Japanese and the Chinese. Are those superstitions one whit more inconsequent than some of the figments of our own religions?

The prayer slips thrown overboard were, however, slightly different. Each was perforated with little holes. The Chinese crew knew that a storm was coming. Storms they believed

to be caused by devils—devils which chase ships at sea. Impede those devils in their pursuit, and the storm would abate. Now, devils cannot pass paper prayer slips until every devil has passed through every hole in every slip. To do that, of course, takes time—the devils' time—and the devils' pursuit is by that means retarded. And if it is sufficiently retarded the ship they are pursuing will be able to reach port in safety before the devils have been able to overtake it. That is sound common sense.

Presently the Chinamen's monotonous sing-song rang out along the deck to the accompaniment of the squeaking of pulley-blocks, the flapping of canvas being hurriedly furled, and the shouting of orders from the bridge.

About half an hour passed. Then the black smoke from the funnels curled oddly in the air and afterwards beat down upon the water.

Thomas came along the deck and we went together to look at the barometer. For some minutes we stood watching it. Now the mercury rose, now it sank, now it vacillated, now for an instant it was still. Then again it began its antics.

In the smoking-room the card tables were deserted. Knots of passengers stood on the deck, some shading their eyes as they scanned the ocean and intently watched the greenish-greyish clouds rising above a narrow white streak on the surface of the dark-blue water away against the sky-line.

A grey-haired mariner whom we had come to look upon as the ship's weather prophet stood leaning against the stanchion, looking through his telescope. He shut it with a snap and spat viciously at a spittoon inside the smoking-room door.

"To-morrow between ten and midnight I should say," he said, speaking to himself.

"What?" some of us asked.

"The typhoon that's coming. Better pull yourselves together in the bar," and his grin was cynical.

By noon next day the wind had risen considerably. By six in the evening a gale was blowing. A few hours later the typhoon struck us.

We had been kept below since lunch-time, and from lunch-time onward a feeling of fear had grown upon us all, though none admitted it. The women behaved splendidly. They, too, must have felt frightened, yet they carried on those who were not ill, as if nothing unusual were occurring. Hours went by. The roar of the wind and sea continued to increase.

Where were those young fellows who had boasted so lustily? I looked about for them. Huddled in groups, with blanched cheeks and trembling limbs, most of them were praying—praying as I am sure never in their lives had they prayed before.

And still the sea rose. The wind bellowed and screamed; "screamed" is no exaggeration. And with us all was the terrifying knowledge that between us and eternity out there in the raging darkness were but a few inches of timber.

Inside the ship pandemonium reigned. Straining timbers squeaked and cracked; doors rattled on their hooks; glass and chinaware and all else breakable was shattered and then shattered again into fragments.

In the saloons and cabins and up and down the alleyways boots and shoes and bags and boxes and suitcases and trunks—everything not fastened down or tied up—was being hurled with terrific force in every direction. To stand erect without support had become impossible. At intervals would come the momentary conviction that the whole thing must be an awful dream from which one would presently awaken.

A huge sea must have struck the boat amidships, for all at once we were hurled against a door, which the impact burst open, so that we all tumbled headlong into the alleyway. And at that moment the electric lights went out, leaving us in darkness. There came a grating, scrunching sound above even the howling of the storm, followed by men shouting.

And then we knew that the bridge had been swept away.

Close by we heard a cry, a woman's cry, followed by horrid oaths. Then light appeared. Hurricane lamps were being brought, and we saw—

Stretched upon the floor of the alleyway was a woman. Her husband, Peter Blank, was kneeling on her legs. His left hand clutched her, pinning her to the floor. With his right he was untying the safety belt which she had bound about her. We saw him pull the belt off his wife and fasten it round himself.

Twice again we heard her piteous cry——

What happened after that I don't know, for when I recovered consciousness I was in bed in the Grand Hôtel which overlooks the Bund at Yokohama. My head was bandaged and I was in great pain.

For some days I was forbidden to see anybody. My first visitor, of course, was Thomas. He told me I had been knocked unconscious.

Some aboard, he said, had been drowned.

"Peter Blank was among the saved," he added with a laugh. "And his wife was saved too. Wonder what she thinks of him? The fellows in the club here call him 'Lion-hearted Peter' now!"

Some months after that horrible experience we were lying back in lounge chairs, sipping whiskies and sodas, in the most beautiful cemetery in the world, the lovely Happy Valley of Hong Kong. We were trying to decide where to go next, when the Hindu servant approached.

"You a mail, sahib——just a come," he said, and handed us each some letters. "You a shirts a come too, sahib——twelve-twelve."

I knew that by "twelve-twelve" he meant that twelve dozen of Thomas's linen shirts had come back from London after being washed there, or rather dressed. For one of Thomas's mental kinks was a set conviction that nowhere in the world could white linen shirts be properly washed but in London. He therefore was in the habit, no matter in what part of the world, of sending his shirts to a dresser in London, twelve dozen at a time, which in due course came back to him re-dressed, packed in a metal-lined, hermetically sealed case. In one city in America, Jamestown in North Dakota I think it was, an enterprising newspaper

It formed, in fact, one of the principal topics in his journal for several days while we were there.

We had been opening and reading our letters in silence for a while, when Thomas handed me one of his with this remark:

"What do you think of that, old chap?"

It came from an individual in the City of London to whom I knew Thomas had long ago given a power of attorney. It informed him in very plain words that his capital was, owing to his "colossal extravagance," becoming greatly reduced, so that if he wished to avoid trouble in the near future he must at once begin to retrench. Letters in the same strain from the same individual had come to him before, and he had paid no attention to them. But in this one the language was more forcible; it seemed to forecast disaster.

"What shall you do?" I said.

"Do? Nothing. What would you have me do?"

"Your yacht has been lying idle at Southampton for over three years. Why not sell it?"

"If anything's 'sold to defray expenses' it will be your coat," he laughed; a little while before he had, in one of his generous moods, bought me a magnificent sealskin coat, a gold cigar case set in diamonds, and one or two other things, most of which were afterwards stolen.

"But seriously," I said, "why run on to financial rocks when there is no need to?"

He turned upon me:

"I shall sell nothing—nothing at all. Blank is bluffing me: he always was a bluffer."

And so the subject was dropped.

For a year or more Thomas had been developing a great liking for beautiful scenery: until then beautiful women and beautiful gems were the only things he had really admired. But the lovely places we had been in during the time we had now been together had apparently sown this seed in his queer brain, and for my part I was glad. Recently he had raved about the glorious landscapes of the many countries we had been in—picturesque spots like Nikko and Nagasaki, and the Inland Sea of Japan, and Mount Lavinia in Ceylon.

and the imposing landscapes of the Rocky Mountains which the Denver and Rio Grande and the Canadian Pacific Railways had revealed to us.

"What about Yosemite, that valley in California?" he said suddenly. "They say its scenery is the most gorgeous in North America. I'm just dying to go there."

Accordingly we left Hong Kong the next day, much as I had looked forward to its approaching race meeting.

To try to describe Yosemite would be ridiculous, because it is indescribable. Its grandeur is so stupendous as to be absolutely bewildering. The valley lies about a hundred miles from San Francisco, in the heart of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, and when we went there the railway to it from San Francisco stopped at a hamlet called Raymund, seventy miles from the entrance to the valley. To complete the journey it was necessary to drive from Raymund in a waggon drawn by four or six horses, with one stop only, at a village called Wowona.

Providence is said to set a special guard on fools, and looking back upon the past I sometimes think He must. We started from San Francisco for Yosemite with close upon four thousand pounds in our possession, in American paper money. But for our two servants we were quite alone. San Francisco at that time was the home of the world's scum. There were men, some we had met, who would have risked their necks to secure a couple of thousand *dollars*. They knew Thomas to be a millionaire and a crank. They knew we were going to Yosemite, unarmed and unprotected. To have followed us, overtaken us between Raymund and Yosemite, fifty miles from the nearest railway, twenty from the nearest human habitation, and relieved us of every dollar we had upon us—what could have been simpler?

And yet nothing happened. To-day, I believe, the railway runs right up to the valley.

If you can picture to yourself a valley a mile or two broad and stretching right away out of sight; in it a lake with fish distinctly visible swimming along its bed; on both sides escarpments of rock rising *perpendicularly* to heights of three

it was a lovely evening in late autumn, and we were
 having supper in the wooden shanty in Wowona which called
 itself the "hotel." Few people go to Yosemite so late in
 the year, and we had the inn to ourselves—or so we thought.
 It was when a gust of wind slammed the door it also blew over
 the screen, revealing a man sprawled half-way across a table—
 he had been asleep, apparently, and the noise had awakened
 him with a start, for now he sat up, looking about him with a
 bewildered expression.

And then we recognized him.

He stared at us in a dazed sort of way, not recognizing
 us at first. Then we called to him to come over and have a
 drink, and he remembered our previous meeting.
 After that, of course, we soon got into general conversa-
 tion, and presently he asked:

"While driving from Raymond did you notice a grave by
 the roadside—four miles or so before you got here?"

We told him we had seen it. We remembered it because
 our driver had pulled up and got down and looked at it.
 The gaunt stranger grew quite excited when we said
 so.

"Got down and looked at it, did he?" he exclaimed. "Say
 nothing about it, did he?"

"No, just looked at it, that was all," Thomas answered.
 "Whose grave is it?"

"My brother's."
 Thomas bit his lip, vexed at having asked. He was going
 to say something, but the man's now stony stare kept him
 silent.

"He was murdered," he said after a pause, looking hard
 at Thomas still. "For seven years I have tried to find his
 murderer. I think I have him now."

The way he glared at each of us in turn was rather dis-
 concerting. I began to feel uneasy. Could the man be going
 mad?

"I am glad of that," I said, hoping to pacify him. He was,
 we could see, suffering under stress of some emotion. "Where
 is he—I mean the man who killed your brother?"

"In this house."

He got up, for no apparent reason, brought his chair round and sat down closer to us. He was staring at us still, with fixed eyes. All at once he went on:

"My brother came here from Cincinnati twelve years ago. He came to prospect for metals. He found gold. He told me about it in the last letter I ever had from him. That was eight years ago. He had a chum—a man I had seen only once and had warned him against then, for I didn't like the look of him.

"And then I heard that he was dead. He was found dead close to here—close to where you saw his grave. Someone had stabbed him in the back. His chum had disappeared.

"For nearly eight years I have hoped to meet that chum. I thought he would one day come back. And he has come back. Some of the gold may be in the valley hidden—gold which had been Jim's. He can find that gold, I mean to let him find it, and then——"

He stopped, poured out some neat spirit and gulped it down. Then he put out his hand and gripped my arm.

"That chum," I felt his grip tighten, "I recognized when you arrived to-day. He drove you here from Raymund. He will drive on to Yosemite to-morrow — *and I shall go with you.*"

We felt astounded. It seemed incredible that the pleasant-spoken young fellow whom we had sat beside all day, who had driven his team of six horses with such consummate skill as the waggon skirted precipices and went past other dangerous places, could have been guilty of such a crime.

I was going to question our companion, when the door opened and the man he had been speaking of came in.

"Evening! Come over, lad, and have a drink!" our companion called to him in the friendliest way.

Soon the two were engaged in apparently friendly conversation. It was clear that the driver did not recognize this man who had told us he had met him once, long ago. Could the story of the assassination be true, I wondered? And if it were, might not our companion have mis-identified this man whom he believed to be his brother's murderer? Yet though he conversed with him in quite a friendly way, there was all the while a queer glint in his eyes.

late that night, when we were alone again, Thomas and I talked over the evening's incident. Ought we to tell the stranger what that man had said about him, we asked each other? Finally we decided that if we started interfering we would probably make matters worse and had therefore better say nothing.

We started for Yosemite early next morning, the four of us including the "chum" driving his ragged team. The stranger was in the best of spirits. He talked and laughed a great deal. Several times "chipped" the driver about the way he handled the ribbons"—he kept them bunched up in one end, while with the other he plied his whip with its twenty-foot thong.

The sun was setting when we arrived at a spot called Glacier Point, from which for the first time we beheld the wonderful Valley of Yosemite lying far below us, its great El Capitan rock rising perpendicularly to a height of 3,300 feet, and the Yosemite and Bridal Veil and Vernal and other marvellous waterfalls shining, white as milk, miles away. The spectacle was awe-inspiring. Thomas, gazing down upon it, became intoxicated with enthusiasm.

We noticed next day, and the day after, and the day after that, that the stranger and our driver were almost always together. They had their meals together, too, and seemed to be on the best of terms. Then one evening, when, after being out all day, we came in, we were told, on inquiry, that the stranger and the team driver had gone out together. They had gone out early in the afternoon and had not been seen since. Somehow that night I couldn't sleep. I kept on wondering and wondering. For the two had not come in, and none knew where they were. Nor did they return next day, or the day after. A week passed, three weeks, a month. Then snow began to fall, at first slowly, soon in great dollar flakes, and we were warned that unless we set out without delay for the low-lying country we should be snowed up in Yosemite for the winter.

What had become of the stranger and the team driver remained a mystery until we were back in England over a year

child. Mr. Pemberton Billing, should he read these lines, will remember the case and all about it.

There is a lovely spot in California called Del Monte. It was, when we were there, perhaps the most fashionable of the summer resorts of America's smart Society, for Society flocks thither in the season not from Western America only but from every part of the United States, not excepting New York City, which is more than three thousand miles away from it.

After being a little while in America for the first time I had come to take it for granted that nobody believed the ridiculous statements one read in American newspaper articles purporting to be reports of interviews obtained with well-known people. Thomas, too, was under that impression, an impression to be suddenly very rudely dispelled.

We were staying at the Del Monte country hotel, and among the interesting visitors was the Judge in the Durrant trial. When last we had seen him he had been in a surging crowd in his own court, vainly trying to force his way through it to reach his tribunal seat, members of the public gibing him meanwhile about his "plug hat" and so on. But that is a digression. One afternoon in the billiard-room we got into conversation with some of the guests on the subject of a fight which was soon to take place—little else was being talked about just then, for what lent special interest to the event was that one of the contestants was a Californian.

Prize fights interested Thomas. And being, as I have said, a rather indiscreet talker, he spoke freely in the billiard-room about the fighters and their chances.

From the first he had maintained, he said, that the Californian "couldn't fight for nuts." That opinion he had not changed, and then and there he would lay four to one against him to anyone willing to take it.

In that strain he continued, to the obvious annoyance of many of his listeners, until presently a young man whom I had noticed sitting apart, listening attentively to all he said, came up to him.

"Mr. Thomas," said the young man, producing a small album, "may I have the honour of your autograph? I am collecting autographs of people of importance."

Ever open to flattery, Thomas signed his name.

Next morning, engrossed in his newspaper while we were at breakfast, he suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"Good heaven!" he said, "Here's a two-column interview—everything I said yesterday about the fight and—great Scott, its got my signature!"

He looked across at me. Then a gleam of intelligence came into his eyes.

"My autograph! That fellow asked me for it—remember? 'Autographs of people of importance.' He said he was collecting them!"

He laughed.

"Well, it serves me right."

He handed me the paper. Right across two columns ran the headlines:

JAMES THOMAS, ESQUIRE, OF LONDON, ENG.
THINKS HARD-HEADED CALIFORNIAN WILL
BE WHIPPED!
LAYS 4 TO 1 AGAINST HIM WINNING!
"CAN'T FIGHT FOR NUTS," HE SAYS.

We were sitting under the awning of the verandah an hour or two later, smoking, when away in the distance a speck became visible approaching at a great pace up the long, straight road which leads to the hotel. As it came nearer its speed increased. Now we saw it was a buggy with a single occupant. It was travelling at a speed of quite twenty miles an hour.

A coloured waiter standing near began to laugh. Then he grew excited.

"See dat, sah?" he exclaimed, pointing. "Dat de hard-headed California boy you say not fight for nuts, sah!"

"Really?" Thomas answered in a tone of indifference. "What's he coming here for?"

"He after you, sah—sure."

Thomas stared at the waiter.

"After me? What do you mean?"

"Sure, sah. He read de newspaper!"

Thomas jumped out of his chair.

The horrid truth had flashed upon us both. The Californian prize-fighter had read the interview. Mad with rage at the affront Thomas had put upon him by saying he "couldn't fight for nuts," he was coming to wreak vengeance!

Thomas grabbed the waiter's arm.

"See here," he pushed some bills into his hand, "it's up to you to hide me. Get a move on—quick!"

The buggy with its equine greyhound was not half a mile away. The "hard-headed Californian" could be seen inside it humped up, urging his steed to greater efforts still. Its forelegs were shooting out in front of it like piston rods as it sprinted into the avenue.

"Dis way, sah!"

The waiter ran into the hotel, with Thomas at his heels. He conducted him to back premises, unlocked a huge store cupboard, signalled to him to go into it, locked the door upon him, and took away the key.

When I got back to the verandah the hard-headed fighter was already there. Near by stood the panting trotter covered with sweat and foam.

"*Whar's that Gawd-damned British guy?*" he was bellowing. "*I'll show him if I can fight for nuts or not, I guess! Whar is he, I say? Whar is he?*"

A horrible looking person, enormously tall, broad, thick-set and with a smashed nose, he had a huge, ugly mouth showing great yellow fangs. The thought of Thomas being mauled by such a monster made me almost "come over queer." And still he kept on:

"*Whar is he—blarst him? I'll take his four to one. . . .*"

Our waiter came to the rescue.

"De gentleman, Misser Thomas, gone—sah. He go early—sah. Baggage gone—sah. He no come back—sah."

Hearing that, the brute roared as the bull of Bashan must have roared. He would follow him. He would show him who could fight for nuts. . . .

But the waiter persisted. He didn't know—had no idea where "Misser Thomas" had gone. Nor did the manager know. Nobody knew. Mr. Thomas had left, taking all his chattels

with him and leaving no address. And that was all the information the fighter could get from anybody.

Yet for two hours he remained storming, roaring, bellowing. Indeed, had he got hold of Thomas I believe he would have killed him, so distracted was he with fury.

He offered big rewards to anybody who would find "the guy," but our coloured waiter remained loyal.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Boating, picnics, tennis, golf, polo, dancing and plenty of love-making constitute the pastimes popular in Del Monte during the summer season. I would willingly have remained there a month or two, but when some weeks had passed, Thomas grew restless again.

It is strange how when you travel even off the beaten track you often meet people whom you have met before. At Del Monte we had renewed acquaintance with many men and women we had become acquainted with in different parts of the world during our wanderings, and some of them seemed to vie with one another in showing us hospitality for hospitality's sake.

I can say with truth that the hospitality of Americans is almost always spontaneous and disinterested—they don't ask you to stay with them because they will eventually want something in return. Which reminds me of a point we both noticed more than once. Americans invite you to their homes, press you to remain with them as long as you can, and put themselves to inconvenience to entertain you. Then they come over to England, and we meet them again, and what do most of us do? Do we invite them to stay with us, and do all we can to give them a good time? No, we take them into the club and give them a drink, maybe we invite them to lunch at the club, possibly we "dine them" there. If they have women folk we invite the lot to dine with us at a restaurant, and take them

to a play afterwards, then "hope we shall see them again soon," and there our hospitality ends. That is the return many of us make for the unstinted hospitality most Americans show us when we are in their country.

Though I can't understand anybody's wishing or liking to live in Chicago, each time we stayed at the Auditorium Hotel there we became more impressed than before at the greatness of the city, when we reflected that a hundred or so years before Chicago had been "a hole in the ground." Indeed, to stand on the roof of the tremendous Masonic Building and gaze down on those splendid streets stretching miles away into the distance; on those thousands of gigantic and magnificently constructed blocks; on those enormous factories; those huge warehouses and colossal stores, almost all of which have sprung up within the last eighty or ninety years, makes one ponder the energy, the enterprise and the greatness of the American people.

There are still Englishmen who directly they arrive in Paris for the first time get into *fiacres* and are driven to see the Morgue—to them, apparently, Paris's principal attraction. In the same way hundreds of Europeans travelling for pleasure as soon as they arrive in Chicago, make straight for the *abattoirs* where the slaughter of pigs in their thousands and in their millions goes on all day and every day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

Thomas was one of that sort; he wanted to see the *abattoirs* at once, and so I had to accompany him. It was a revolting spectacle, and I hope never to see it or anything like it again—those floors awash with blood; the hideous stench; the rattle of the machinery; the terrified, screaming pigs; the blood-splashed butchers and their assistants; the endless chain of pigs travelling head downward towards the man waiting with a knife to slit their throats as they pass him at the rate of I forget how many a minute.

"The only part of the pig we don't use," say the pork packers of Chicago, "is its squeak."

There is an old saying that the smallest dog always makes the biggest noise. Of that saying we were reminded whilst

Newfoundland. I have attended the opening of Parliament in London, and in Washington, and I have been in the Paris Chamber of Deputies, and in the Reichstag in Berlin, yet not one of those bodies of legislators was so full of its importance as was the little legislative body of Newfoundland. Thomas was greatly amused. The whole thing reminded him, he declared, of an *opéra bouffe* blended with "Alice in Wonderland." But we were careful, of course, not to betray what we felt, for the people of St. John's are extremely susceptible to ridicule.

And what friendly folk they were. They reminded us in that respect of the people of Virginia. Descended mostly from English and Irish west-country forbears who migrated to Newfoundland to join the fishing industry, many bore familiar Cornish and Irish surnames and possessed characteristics of both countries. Plenty whose parents even had never seen Ireland spoke with an Irish brogue, while others had the dialect of Cornwall or of Devon.

Among the Englishmen we met there was an individual named Dodd. For years, he told us, he had drifted about the world, trying his hand at this, and then trying his hand at that, until one day he landed in Newfoundland. And in Newfoundland, finding how good the sport there was, he built a shanty on a river bank, then advertised in British journals for sportsmen to come out to him to fish and shoot. The fee he charged each guest was two dollars and a half a day, for which sum he boarded and lodged the guest, provided excellent shooting and fishing, and, when necessary, dogs and guns and ammunition and fishing rods and all else.

So successful was his venture, that when I came to know him he had already started sporting boxes in different parts of the island, all of which, he told me, were crowded with British sportsmen during the season. And, indeed, to me it is astonishing that more of the men who spend large sums on the rearing and preserving of pheasants at home do not side-track pheasant shooting for awhile and go for their sport to Newfoundland or some such country, where excellent shooting and fishing are to be had at probably half the cost of rearing pheasants, including the cost of the voyage.

As the seal-fishing fleet was about to sail, of course Thomas decided that we must embark with it "to see what happened," and accordingly I made arrangements. On the Sunday before the date we were to start, the great Roman Catholic cathedral in St. John's, which has accommodation for ten thousand worshippers, was so crowded that only with difficulty were we able to force our way in to see a spectacle we had been told we ought not to miss.

The spectacle was that of ten thousand or more fishermen, almost all bald-headed, praying to God for the success of their fishing campaign and their safe return—a singular sight, and impressive.

But even Thomas came to the conclusion, before we had been many days at sea, that in starting on that expedition he had made a big mistake. The rolling of the light boat, the coarse food and bad accommodation, the awful stench which pervaded everything and which we could not avoid, and the constant companionship—which also we could not avoid—of the roughest of rough seamen, made us more than once curse the day we had embarked.

"Anyway," I said to him one day, when he had been repining, "it's another new sensation—the sort of new excitement you always want!"

His reply was to the point, but won't bear repetition.

Thus for days we sailed in extreme discomfort, one day like every other. Then one morning the crew became all agog with excitement.

The seals had been sighted at last!

Pursuing them and trying to cut off their retreat to the open sea from the ice-floes was interesting and exciting. But the carnage which followed was horrible.

Having successfully cut the seals off from the water entire crew leapt on to the ice, each armed with a wooden truncheon, and rushing upon the baby seals set to work to hit them on the head, regardless of their pitiful cries and the mournful wailing of the parent seals. The spectacle turned us sick, especially when directly the seals had thus been massacred their pelts were torn off them and the bloody carcasses tossed back on to the ice. I have sometimes wondered since how many

women would continue to buy sealskin if they could behold the spectacle of that holocaust and hear the heart-rending screams which accompany it.

We were entertained in Singapore by the Northumberland Fusiliers, at that time stationed there; in Raffles's Hotel I had come across one of their officers, Captain Charles Wood, with whom I had been at school, a son of Sir Evelyn Wood. They insisted on our making their mess our headquarters, and took the trouble of driving us round the town to show us everything worth seeing, including the Botanical Gardens with their wonderful tropical vegetation. And from there we went on to Penang. It was while in Penang that Thomas suddenly decided to visit Molokai, the leper settlement in the Pacific. What made him wish to see it were some stories we were told in Penang by a Belgian trader who had known intimately a Belgian missionary who contracted the disease while in the pursuit of his avocation in Molokai, and eventually died of it—Father Damien.

The missionaries we had met up to then had not greatly impressed us. A few had been "white" men, but we had met some who owned a launch laden with "Bibles"—in reality firearms and ammunition, cases of alcohol, tobacco, etc., which they sold or bartered to the natives they were out to "convert."

The missionaries we met later who were in the habit of visiting Molokai from time to time were not like that. We had long talks with some of them, and they appeared to be fine men carrying on a noble work—not their work of conversion which surely is a task of supererogation, but of helping the unfortunates to bear their terrible affliction with a minimum of suffering, mental as well as physical. Men of education and of good family, they had, we gathered, voluntarily cut themselves adrift from almost all outside human intercourse.

"White leprosy," they told us, is, though virulent, not easily contracted. One of them mentioned having himself known white lepers living in the heart of London, yet none had suffered infection from them. That the disease would ever be completely stamped out he said he did not believe. Recently however, powerful

advanced by a well-known American scientist, who nevertheless admits that inoculation against leprosy has not hitherto proved successful.

The only occasion during our wanderings when I saw Thomas overcome by a deep and genuine emotion was once in Texas. We had been on the train about forty-eight hours, when it began suddenly to slow down. Nobody was surprised, the inference being either that we were stopping at some wayside station, or that the engine needed water. As the train came to a stop, however, there came a frightful scream from outside. In an instant the passengers were all on their feet and peering out of carriage windows.

Almost at once there came another scream, more piercing than the first, and then another. Shouting and the sound of turmoil some way off followed, and in a few minutes passengers were scrambling down from the cars and running and stumbling over the metals in the direction of a little crowd some hundreds of yards away. From the centre of the crowd a column of smoke arose, dense and heavy.

Thomas had not moved. Staring out of the window of his state-room, his gaze became riveted on the distant crowd. Then the smoke drifted a little, and we saw:

A human form, either hanging from, or else bound to, an upright stake which the smoke had until then obscured. And while we looked, a sheet of flame crept up it again, shrouding it completely. The screams had stopped. We heard a cheer. Then yells of execration.

"Get me brandy!" Thomas said in a faint voice.

His face had turned livid. Beads of sweat oozed, rolled down it. I took his hand. It was clammy, frigid, almost pulseless.

After giving him the brandy, and holding his head, I looked again in the direction of the crowd. The smoke had cleared to some extent. Tongues of red and yellow flame shot up into the air. I could see nothing else.

For some days Thomas was delirious. A doctor and two nurses remained with him. I had slipped our car near Washington, the Washington of Texas, and in that depressing little town we had to stay for some weeks. Why the negro had been

Of the various scholastic establishments we went to see in different States, the most interesting was the Leland Stanford University. It had an unusual origin, too, we were told. The story ran that when Leland Stanford, aged only twenty-one, lay dying, his father asked him how he would like the huge fortune which would come to him if he recovered, to be invested or disposed of if he died. And the boy's answer had been: "Build a splendid University and endow it."

And thus did the Leland Stanford University eventually come into being.

At the time we were shown over it the students numbered, if I remember aright, between twelve and fifteen hundred, of whom about one half were girls.

Since Thomas had, when in Hong Kong, received the warning letter from the manager of his affairs, two more letters, in the same strain, had come. We were now in Denver City again, at the Brown Palace. One day, as we were finishing lunch, a cable was brought to him. Thomas opened it, read it, tossed it across to me.

That, too, was from the individual who had a power of attorney. It did not urge him to return to England, as one of the letters had done. It was peremptory—*curt*. It practically ordered him to come back at once to London.

Generally London is a delightful place to return to. But now when we arrived there again after our long absence from England, save for a couple of brief visits, London somehow seemed flat, lacking in animation, wanting in "life" and excitement. As we drove through its streets—Thomas's brougham had met him at Victoria—boys still ran about shouting "Winners!" as they had been doing when we left and had presumably been doing ever since. The contents bills of the evening papers announced sordid tragedies, just as they had done every evening years before. And on opening the paper the first news I read was that a Mrs. Somebody-or-Other had looked charming whilst in the Park, wearing . . . and been "conversing with" Lord I-Forget-Who.

Very tame, very petty, very shallow it all seemed.

The servants at Maresfield Gardens did not greet Thomas with the effusion they had displayed when he had . . .

the previous occasions. It struck me, too, that they looked much underworked and terribly overfed, while one or two obviously were sulky. The parasites who usually made Thomas's house their home, even during his absence, were not there this time, and I felt glad, though astonished. In short the "atmosphere" of the house and of all who were in the house had changed.

"No need to see Blank before to-morrow," Thomas said to me, naming the sender of the cable which had summoned him home. "I mean to enjoy myself to-night."

He went to the telephone and rang up some of his friends, inviting them to supper at an hotel which he named. Supper would be at midnight in a private room, he said, as in the old days.

In his library the tables were heaped up with unopened letters. He rang, told the footman to bring waste-paper baskets, then told him to shovel the letters into the baskets and take them away and burn them. Some had post-marks dated a long while back.

This was almost the first time I had been quite alone with Thomas in his Maresfield Gardens house; almost always before there had been sycophants surrounding him.

We went to a theatre after dinner, then drove to the hotel where he had arranged to meet his friends. Most of them were already there.

Supper was nearly over, and we were preparing to set out for one of his former night haunts, when our head waiter told him that he was wanted on the telephone.

"You might see who it is," he said to me.

It was the writer of the warning letters which Thomas had received whilst abroad.

"I must speak to Tasker himself," he said; the voice sounded agitated. "I have been trying to get him all night."

"Can't I give him a message?" I asked. "He doesn't want to be bothered—to-night."

"No, you can't, and he's got to be bothered. I must speak to him personally. Tell him it's most urgent, most important. Hasn't he heard? Doesn't he know?"

"Know what?"

"That he is ruined, utterly ruined. Tell him to come to the telephone. Tell him who it is."

I found Jim and his friends about to start for the night haunt—a place called the Rocket. It was not a night club. They were all in high spirits. Tasker was laughing and joking. I drew him aside, and spoke to him, but I didn't tell him he was ruined. I felt I hadn't the pluck to.

"You had better go on," he called to his friends. "We'll follow on presently."

He must have remained in the telephone box over ten minutes. Outside, I paced up and down, wondering. How would he take the news that he was ruined, if it were true? Would he give way to despair? Would he do something rash? Would he, when he came out of that glass hutch, have "aged visibly" after the manner of people in books who meet misfortune unexpectedly?

He came out at last. He was trimming his nails with a pen-knife, and engrossed in the operation.

"Very annoying, isn't it?" he said, as he looked up. "You were right, after all—I have been robbed right and left. The people you warned me against have been robbing me for years. Give me a cigar."

"Not a word to anybody," he went on, when he had lit it. "They'll find out fast enough. My servants know already; that's why they were so odd. And the parasites, as you call them, know too; that's why they'd left my house—rats from the sinking ship, what? By this time next week I shan't have a friend left."

There was something ironical in his calling them "friends" till—those sycophants who for years had got out of him all they could.

As we alighted from the brougham, on our arrival at the Rocket, attendants came hurrying out, obsequious, servile, fawning. A hag bent almost double shuffled towards us out of the shadows, murmuring inaudibly. In her hand were boxes of matches. The trembling hand was blue with cold.

Jim turned to me.

"Give her a fiver—a tenner: it may turn my luck," he said.

He entered the

and

outside no light was visible. I led the hag into the light of a flickering gas-lamp, and there poured into her shrivelled claw a handful of silver and gold. I think at first she thought she was dreaming. Then as she tucked the money away amongst her rags her expressions of gratitude became pathetic.

I found Jim already mobbed by sycophants; those had, of course, not yet heard of his calamity. He looked at me and laughed. He knew what I was thinking—that soon those flatterers and hangers-on would drop away, as leeches sucking a human body drop off when touched with salt.

And so, before many days passed, the end came. Our feckless career had ended. My second contract with my old schoolfellow and good friend lapsed automatically.

And now he is dead.

Part III

CHAPTER ONE

Now on a concert tour of which I had become Press representative, I was able to contrast Canadian with United States cities—places like Halifax, Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Quebec, St. John, Moosejaw, Medicine Hat, Vancouver, Victoria, and many more, with such towns as Albany, Richmond, Chattanooga, St. Louis, Denver, St. Paul, Houston, San Francisco and San José.

Travelling for amusement, as I had been for so long, and travelling now no longer for amusement, I soon came to the conclusion that to travel for some definite object is pleasanter on the whole. I had arranged with a British newspaper syndicate to write while on that tour a series of articles on Canadian immigration, the question being at that time a good deal under discussion. I had letters of introduction to men of standing in the Dominion, but in addition I visited many Canadian farms and interviewed the farmers, with the result that I soon discovered the colossal boosting of Canada to be what Americans call a "swizzle."

The Canadian Government were offering at that time one hundred and sixty free acres to settlers from the Old Country, and everywhere were pictures showing vast expanses of rich pasture land which that generous Government was anxious to give away.

The acres were there, certainly, thousands and thousands of them to be had for the asking. Indeed, so lavish was the Government that it gave not only free acres, but on those acres also free trees and free impenetrable under-growth which the happy, silly emigrant found on arrival he would have to clear away before beginning to attempt either tilling or cultivation.

And how were those free acres to be cleared? Of course by employing labour—Canadian labour. And how were imple-

them in Canada. They could be bought and paid for outright, the emigrant was blandly informed; or they could be obtained on the deferred payment system; or they could be hired at so much a month. All quite good from the Canadian point of view. That hoisting of the Dominion at that time; that offer of one hundred and sixty free acres to settlers; those promises of big profits and quick returns to immigrants from the Old Country. Good for the railways too—very good. Thousands of rail fares paid by immigrants returning home—disgusted at having been "had." An excellent and profitable stunt in the opinion of Canada's "shrewd financiers" and "men of affairs," but disastrous for the poor wretches who by specious misrepresentation had been lured in their hundreds and thousands in those years, and had to come back to England with their "little all" all spent.

All that and much more I put plainly in my articles. Result—a "misunderstanding" with the syndicate, and a cable to it from me cancelling my contract to write for it.

To-day, of course, everyone knows the truth. A man to "make good" in Canada must have capital or must speculate. Otherwise he becomes nothing more than a labourer. He may then earn a livelihood, but will rarely amass a fortune. And "making good" in the Dominion is synonymous with amassing a fortune.

Concerts were given during that tour not only in the big cities but also in small towns, and even in some outlying hamlets, the last-named populated chiefly by cowboys.

The idea still largely prevalent in England is that cowboys are an uncouth, uncultivated, rough lot of young men who spend their lives in galloping about on half-broken horses, chasing cattle, swinging lassoes, yelling uproariously and terrifying peaceful villagers by galloping madly down their one street, firing off revolvers and looting any store where alcohol is procurable.

That impression has been fostered and may have been started by film pictures of life in the so-called "woolly West," and by stories of adventure written by authors whose knowledge of bush life is confined probably to life in the wilds of Shepherd's Bush. I admit that before I began to travel I

imagined cowboys to be rather a "tough" crowd, but when I came to know some of them, as I did whilst with Tasker and afterwards whilst on concert tours, I discovered how mistaken I had been. Rough they may be, many of them, in their way of living and in their mode of speech, but for downright good fellows possessing in a high degree those manly and chivalrous attributes which we call the "instincts of a gentleman," give me cowboys of the western prairies every time.

Many of those we met were descended from British stock of the best type—younger sons and cousins and connections of old English, Irish and Scottish families who had deemed them too "uncivilized," too "wild," too reckless and too extravagant ever to "get on" in this conservative and conventional country, or to adapt themselves to the usages of "respectable society."

Three members of our concert party during that first tour were young and pretty and, if I may put it so, in every way desirable. Here in London, also in most big English and Continental cities, are plenty of men who think that because a girl is on the stage or on the concert platform they have a right to treat her with familiarity, and sometimes to go even further. I can say with truth that if I had a young sister or a young daughter whose profession necessitated her being let loose without protection either amongst a lot of men in the heart "civilized" London, or in the wilds of "uncivilized" Canada where her associates would be cowboys and men of the type, I would choose the cowboys without an instant hesitation.

Indeed, whenever we arrived in one of their quaint little towns or hamlets to give a concert, sometimes after a journey of many miles by sleigh, the whole lot would set out to entertain us. They gave us the best of everything they had; they showed us whatever hospitality they could; they put themselves to inconvenience to make us as comfortable as possible—in one village, where the only inn was full, a cowboy I had met that day for the first time insisted on my sleeping in his bed, and he slept on the floor! And not once during that tour, or during any of our subsequent tours in the Dominion, was a word uttered by any one of those men to which the women of our party could have objected. And yet they were a godless

crowd, fearless of man or devil, ready for any adventure and quite heedless of to-morrow.

Their relatives at home no doubt looked on them as wasters: there are well-meaning people in most countries who think that every man who does not conform to the rules of polite society; who possesses originality and initiative; who can't brook the restraint which the conventions would impose upon him; and above all who proves himself incapable of amassing money in some orthodox manner, must *ipso facto* be a prodigal. It is one of the biggest illusions such folk can possibly cherish.

A town packed, when we were there, with young Englishmen of the type I have described was Calgary, in the Province of Alberta. In fact almost the whole population of Calgary seemed at that time to consist of young Englishmen. And amongst the lot there was not an ounce of false shame. A peer's cousin hustled trunks at the railway station. A couple of Winchester College boys were scene-shifters at the theatre. The son of the rich proprietor of a wholesale shop in the West End of London travelled in charge of a C.P.R. train. And on the night of our concert they all wore evening clothes, and after the concert they invited us all to supper.

Some of those Calgary exiled Englishmen belonged to the West Frontier Mounted Police; some were cattle breeders, some were store assistants, some were railroad workers, some were doing odd jobs as they came along, one of them ran a laundry, another kept a grocer's shop, another owned a liquor bar, another had a contract to clean windows. In England had they done those things they would have lost caste. In Canada you don't lose caste, no matter what you do. But even if they had lost caste, what would they have cared?

Among Englishmen in Montreal to whom I had been given letters of introduction was a Captain Edye, a descendant, I was told, of the Edye who built the Eddystone Lighthouse. Hardly had I entered his house when he sprang upon me, pushed me into the drawing-room, flung me on to the sofa, and began violently rubbing my ears with great handfuls of snow. "Lucky you came in," he said at last. "Another minute and you'd have been frost-bitten!"

"Of course," he said, when later I was lunching with him, "we Englishmen have largely ourselves to blame for the way some Canadians dislike us. We come out here to farm, we say. We know nothing about farming and next to nothing about anything. Yet directly we arrive we begin to find fault. We find fault with the customs of Canadians, with their methods of doing business, with their hotels and hotel arrangements, with their trams and railway systems, with their ways and manners, in fact with everything Canadian we can think of.

" 'In England we don't do it that way,' is what we are always saying. 'Why don't you do it our way? I think your way is rotten.' Naturally the Canadians resent that sort of thing. On the other hand Englishmen get riled, and rightly, at the way so many Canadians love to lay down the law; at the way some of them talk about London as if London were a back number; at the way others sneer at the mother country. But Canada is a young country still, you must remember, and a country of which Canadians have at least every right to feel proud."

It was eleven o'clock next morning when he took me into the St. James's Club in Montreal. We should find there, he had told me, a young Englishman typical of the sort of ne'er-do-well emigrants just then flocking into Canada.

The club was deserted at that hour, the members being at work. But in the smoking-room, as we entered it, a young gentleman looked up from the newspaper he was reading and smiled at Edye pleasantly.

He was beautifully dressed—he might have just stepped in from Bond Street. He had a cigar in his mouth and a whisky-and-soda at his elbow.

"Well, Blank," Captain Edye said, "what about the farm? Let me introduce my friend," and he presented me.

"The farm? What farm?" the elegant young immigrant inquired languidly. "Oh—ah—you mean *my* farm. No, I haven't found one yet to suit me, but I think I've heard of one. It's rather far away, no station near, no town, and—er—no links within miles, but otherwise—not bad. And—ah—I've bought my drawing-room furnichar, and my dining-room

"That's it, you see," Edye said when we had left him. "Si there all day—been here for weeks—does nothing—talks a le 'wonders' this and 'thinks' that and—well, there you are. He'll be back in England in a month or two, just like lots of others. Canada's no use for men of that type."

In the big towns in Canada, cities like Quebec, Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg, a great part of the population understands good music, is able to appreciate it, judges it on its merits, and does not need to be told if this or that artist is singing or playing well, or if he has a fine voice, or only a moderately good voice, or has been properly trained.

That is not the case, however, in plenty of the small towns—what in England we should call small provincial towns. In many of the latter where we had been billed to give a concert a small crowd would assemble at the railway station to see the concert party arrive, and what it looked like, and to note, in particular, how much baggage it brought with it. We had, fortunately, a great deal of baggage, so that news would be spread that we must be a very good company, and on the night of the concert the house would be packed. Had we, however, brought with us, say, one trunk apiece and stayed at some second-rate hotel instead of at the most expensive, the aborigines of those unsophisticated small towns would have taken it for granted that we couldn't be worth hearing.

Nor had the bulk of the inhabitants of the small towns much confidence in their own judgment. Often, indeed, it amused us to watch the majority of the audience, unable to decide for itself if it ought or ought not to applaud, waiting to see what the people in the front seats would do. If that select minority began to applaud, then the whole house would applaud. If, on the contrary, the front seats did not applaud, then the rest of the audience knew that what it had heard could not have been good, and would adopt the frigid attitude.

CHAPTER TWO

AMUSING incidents occurred on some of those concert tours. As an example, once, in a small Canadian town, an item on the programme was an excerpt from an opera in which, as the soprano ends her solo, she falls backward on to a bed. At the eleventh hour the discovery was made that not in the whole town was there a bed suitable for the purpose, Canadian beds being then almost all very short in the leg. So what was to be done?

The manager rose to the occasion. He called up four sturdy stage hands, made them kneel on all fours, to form a square, dumped a short-legged bed on top of them, one leg resting on each man's back, covered bed and men with an enormous rug, and rang up the curtain.

In the wings we waited and watched, hoping for the best. The soprano ended her solo, tottered—then, with a cry, flung herself backward on to the covered bed. We saw the bed wobble, heard the men under the rug say horrible things as the legs of the bed jarred their spines, then the curtain dropped and all was well.

The audience stamped and applauded and shouted for an encore. But the bed men had struck and refused to "appeal" again.

I had been given an introduction to Senator Marconi by one of his directors, Bannatyne by name, but when we got to Glace Bay, in Nova Scotia, where the wireless station is, Marconi was away. His manager there, however, whose name was Vivian, and his staff of two, entertained our concert party in the most lavish manner, and finally insisted on our staying the night in the hut which at that time was their quarters. Why is it that when Englishmen settle in a colony their stiffness and aloofness disappear and they become so hospitable and friendly?

The wireless receiving hut was distant some hundreds of yards from the hut where the staff lived, and so terrific was the gale that night, straight in from the Atlantic, that those of us who accepted Vivian's invitation to visit the hut to see the flashes of wireless messages arriving had to crawl part of the way on hands and knees.

Extraordinary people, artists. So open-handed, most of them, so thrifless, so inconsistent, so temperamental, so self-centred, so tolerant and broad-minded and yet in some respects so small-minded, so passionate, so highly strung, often so jealous one of another and so "catty", yet so forgiving the moment afterwards. Artists, with rare exceptions, ought not to marry if they look for happiness and peace of mind.

I remember two *prima donne* rehearsing some opera in Covent Garden Opera House one morning. One stood on the stage, singing into the empty auditorium. The other was in the wings watching. When the one singing had finished, the other rushed up to her, grasped her hand in both her own, and exclaimed as though quite overcome:

"My dear, how amazing this house is for sound: your voice sounded quite big!"

But the other hit back, pretty hard:

"*C'est une grande misère*", she quoted from La Bruyère, "*que de n'avoir pas assez d'esprit pour bien parler, ni assez de jugement pour se taire!*"

That amazingly capable old gentleman, Sir Samuel Bagster Boulton, the versatility of whose intelligence was so great that people said he could have made a fortune in five different ways instead of amassing a fortune in one way only, as he did, entertained at his beautiful place, Coppéd Hall, near Tottenham, famous concert artists, distinguished actors and actresses, well-known painters and literary people and others.

His house parties would assemble at Coppéd Hall on the Friday or Saturday and remain until the Monday, and during the whole time they were there something would be "happening." Famous people would sing or dance or recite for the delectation of what we called "the idle guests" to distinguish them from the professional people, and when they had finished they would be entertained in return by performers of a different type—pierrots, and acrobats, and conjurers, and jugglers. Our hostess, Miss Eva Boulton, who married the late Sir George Power, herself danced extremely well, and almost always distinguished dancers were numbered among her guests—Isadora Duncan was one whom I remember.

It was at Copped Hall that Cardinal Manning was born and that Bulwer Lytton wrote "The Last of the Barons" and "The Last Days of Pompeii"—when he wrote there would be twelve wax candles burning on the table and two footmen in plush and powder standing just behind him. Stirring events of historical interest occurred there too, which I need not here enumerate.

I had drifted back to journalism, when one day Thomas Marlow, then editor of the *Daily Mail*, suggested my joining his staff. I was interviewed by Lord Northcliffe, at that time Alfred Harmsworth, and then by Kennedy Jones, and engaged.

There are people who think that daily journalism is an "adventurous" profession. I never found it to be that, unless the task of interviewing a lot of nonentities and a few celebrities, of being dispatched at a moment's notice to write a report of a fire—called by local newspapers a "conflagration"—or a description of the scene of a railway accident, or of a mine disaster, or to picture the scene of some crime, can be called "adventurous." A war-correspondent's work is adventurous enough, but other journalistic work, though emphatically it is interesting and devoid of monotony and drudgery, can hardly be called exciting; it has the advantage, however, of enabling one to use initiative and also any brains one may possess. That, at least, is my experience.

It was while engaged in daily journalism that I had occasion to interview the former Lord Rothschild, and that an incident occurred, now published for the first time, which serves to show again the kind of man he was.

During the morning I had been news-gathering in an East End district where the workers were on strike. The weather was bitterly cold, and there was snow on the ground, and some of the spectacles one witnessed were harrowing. Wives of some of the strikers were on the brink of starvation, almost all the children one saw about were blue with cold, some were in tatters, and plenty had no shoes or stockings.

It happened that during my interview with Lord Rothschild in the afternoon I spoke of what I had seen in the morning, and presently he became interested. After a while he said:

"About how many of those children should you say have no shoes or stockings?"

I told him that I should judge, roughly, between two and three hundred.

He pondered for some moments, then went on:

"If I were to pay for shoes and stockings for those children and for suits of clothes for any you consider to be seriously in need of them, could you see to everything—I mean order the things of some wholesale dealer, plan their distribution and so forth?"

So within a few days the barefooted children were all supplied with shoes and stockings, and some were given suits of clothes, and I suppose that to this day not one of the parents knows who sent those things or who paid for them.

"And mind," I remember his saying as I was leaving, "no mention of this is to appear in any newspaper or other publication, nor are you to say a word about it to anybody."

I think few who knew Lord Rothschild, even those who knew him intimately, had any conception of the many charitable acts which, I have heard since his death, he was in the habit of performing secretly. The only one I can vouch for personally is the one I have just described.

The work of interviewing for newspapers has its occasional moments of humour. Once I went by appointment to the country seat of a very well-known British nobleman—it lay twelve miles from the railway station—to be shown his gallery of pictures, about which the paper I was working for had obtained his sanction to publish a special article.

"His lordship is busy," said the old Irish butler, who admitted me, "but I can tell you everything you want to know about the pictures—I'm after being in his lordship's service nearly forty years."

And he did.

It was lunch time when we had finished, so I asked him if there was any place nearby where I could get something to eat.

"If you'll wait a moment, sorr," he answered, "I'll be after asking his lordship if he would like you to go in and lunch with him."

In a minute he returned.

"His lordship desires me, sorr, to conduct you to the housekeeper's room, where you will have lunch with our housekeeper."

A nasty knock! Mentally I saw myself *tête-à-tête* with a fat, rearsome body with a girdle round her middle, big bunches of rattling keys dangling from her hips, and I pictured my lunch: a bit of bread and cheese and a glass of ale. Then I thought of Maurice Farkoa, who a little while before had, while in America, been sent down to the kitchen by an American multimillionaire to have his supper, and if a gentleman like Farkoa, who lived ordinarily in an atmosphere of patchouli and exotics, I said to myself, could put up with that sort of thing and take it in good part, surely a mere journalist, a "pressman"—odious word——

The butler opened the door of the housekeeper's room and presented me to—the housekeeper.

What a room! And what a housekeeper! It was one of the prettiest boudoirs I have ever been in, most artistically furnished and redolent of some perfume which reminded me of magnolia. As for the housekeeper——

A slender graceful creature of about thirty came forward and extended her hand with a bewitching smile—a really bewitching smile, not one of those artificial things that novelists conjure up. Her auburn hair shot with copper was perfectly beautiful, and her skin was what the beauty specialists call "creamy."

We did lunch *tête-à-tête*, but what a different *tête-à-tête* from the one I had expected! And the lunch—not much bread and cheese and beer. Instead, an exquisitely served little meal, a bottle of Pol Roger, and afterwards a glass of what my charmer called "his lordship's second favourite." If that was his lordship's *second* favourite port, may I be spared to drink one day a glass of his first favourite.

And his cigars were good, too.

A dozen times during that lunch, which didn't end until almost tea-time, I mentally breathed a prayer in thanksgiving for his lordship's consideration in relegating me to the housekeeper's room.

It was at about that time that a volcano in the West Indies called Le Souffrier, for some reason blew its head off. The result was a terrible disaster with enormous loss of life—the death roll of natives ran into thousands.

Said the late Charlie Hands, who had been with the *Daily Mail* since its inception, "If anybody could calculate, round the number of millions or billions of tons of mud and dust and lava which have been vomited out of Le Souffrier, the result would be of interest to the public."

I suggested that one of our distinguished scientific seismologists might be able to help, and proposed an interview with Professor Seeley, at that time at King's College.

But Professor Seeley said at once that to make that calculation would be impossible. He went on to talk, however, on the subject of volcanoes, and earthquakes, and things like that, and I went back to the office to write my article.

"Oh, Seeley is an old ass," I said to myself. "Of course the calculation can be made—I'll have a shot at it myself."

My article, when it appeared next day, contained mixed up with what Seeley had said about volcanoes my own abstruse calculation.

That evening my colleagues peered at me queerly. I noticed one of them grinning. Charlie Hands looked serious.

"You've made a monstrous hash of that calculation we talked about," he said. "I'm afraid there's trouble ahead for you."

And there was.

Early next day Alfred Harmsworth sent for me. On a table in front of him were great piles of letters.

"You see those?" he said in a voice of steel. "Those are all from people—people over the whole of the United Kingdom—who have seen your idiotic calculation regarding Le Souffrier. They ask: 'Have we all gone mad, or what?' And to-morrow we shall be flooded with letters from the Continent, and after that with letters from every part of the world. Do you know that you have not merely brought the *Daily Mail* into utter ridicule—that is bad enough—but in addition your article reads as if Professor Seeley had worked out that problem, and passed it for publication—Professor Seeley—"

of the most distinguished scientists of the day! If he doesn't at once bring an action for libel we shall be extraordinarily lucky. Do you know that according to this monstrous miscalculation of yours Le Souffrier volcano *has shot one-fortieth part of the entire world out of its crater*—that the amount of mud and the rest of it you say it has vomited *would make up a solid mass one mile high and one mile broad and long enough to reach from London to Yokohama?* This letter says so."

And then, unable longer to contain himself, he let himself go. I "sent in my resignation" [*sic*] before I left his room.

He was right to fire me, of course. For to have pretended that he was not would have been childish. I had made as big a blunder as anybody could make, and had in addition unwittingly libelled a man of world-wide renown; I afterwards wrote Seeley a letter of deep apology. On the following Sunday David Christie Murray, who wrote then in *The Referee* under the pseudonym, "Merlin," devoted a whole page to the "monstrous miscalculation." It was a clever and witty article, but it didn't amuse me much.

Northcliffe never completely forgave me for that blunder. I never met him socially, but on the few occasions when I met him in his professional capacity—excepting that last occasion—I found him to be just and considerate; he once told me in all seriousness "not to overwork." Are there many employers who show such solicitude for the people they pay to work for them?

He strongly objected to people afflicted with "swollen head"; more than one of his young men in the old days was dismissed when found to have contracted the "complaint." And that was the reason, I think, why at one time one met so many young men in Fleet Street who after "sending in their resignation" to the *Daily Mail* could find nothing bad enough to say about Northcliffe. If he never forgave a mistake, it is equally true to say that he never favoured a relative. One of the ablest men on his staff, a relative, he "fired" at an instant's notice for making some technical error in an article he had written about seagulls and their habits. Dear old P——! He knew, I suppose, as much about seagulls and their eccen-

I shouldn't be surprised if even to-day his knowledge of seagulls and of other common objects of the seashore were to be found defective.

CHAPTER THREE

ONCE more on the streets, and only the work of free-lancing to keep the wolf from the door, I looked through the newspaper advertisements and one day read the following:

"A Nobleman needs a hunting-and-shooting companion. Liberal salary. Apply Box . . ."

The reply to my application was a letter from Sir Walter Smythe, whom I had known in the days when he was polo secretary at Hurlingham.

I knew that his brother had died some years before, and that Walter Smythe had come into the baronetcy and with it about nine thousand acres, Acton Burnell Park, in Shropshire, and Eshe Hall, in Durham. He suggested my coming to Acton Burnell so to speak "on appro.", and I went.

Acton Burnell lies ten miles from Shrewsbury and is one of the most beautiful estates thereabout, well timbered, and with a big lake. I found that my duties would consist in hunting with the old man twice a week and shooting with him twice a week, while every night I should be called upon to make a fourth at bridge. It sounded a "soft" job, but I knew enough of Sir Walter's peculiarities to be aware that I should need to use tact to retain the post.

He had always been quick-tempered, and years had tended to make him rather irritable. So that when, on the first night I made a fourth at bridge he suddenly flung the cards down on the table, called me a fool, slammed out of the room and went up to bed, I was not taken aback.

Hunting, too, one could not wholly enjoy with one eye only on hounds, the other being occupied in roving about to see where Sir Walter was, what he was doing, and make

sure that he was not risking his neck by jumping big fences at the age of seventy or over. The potentialities of my "office" were further brought home to me when one day out shooting he touched me up with both barrels in such a way that for a week I could not ride and that I had to all intents to eat my meals standing.

Life in a country house I have found to be bearable only when plenty of sport is to be had and the house is full of intelligent and "live" people. Unfortunately the Acton Burnell house parties were for the most part rather tame, Sir Walter's friends being, many of them, on the shady side of seventy. In addition, most of the hunt members were decidedly "starchy," with the exception of men like Fielding of Condover Park; a sporting parson called Patterson, or Pattison, who hunted regularly and whose daughter was a finished horse woman; also Hayward Beresford, Tatham Waters, Corbet and one or two more whose names escape me. The remainder had barely courtesy enough to say good morning at the mee. You see, I was then, so to speak, in "domestic service."

Once I asked Sir Walter what was the matter with them: He answered:

"This is a very exclusive county; you have no doubt heard the phrase, 'proud Salopians.' You are not a Shropshire man; you have not a drop of Shropshire blood in you, and you have no Shropshire relatives. Shropshire people rarely speak to strangers until they know all about them."

I felt grateful for not being a Salopian. In my county Devonshire, everybody talks to everybody in the hunting field; perhaps we rather overdo the "hail-fellow-well-met," but the fault is on the right side. The Shropshire farmers were different—hospitable and friendly. But then in what county are farmers not hospitable and friendly? In Yorkshire they are "dour" at first, but that soon wears off.

It was at a dinner-party in Shropshire—not at Acton Burnell—that I found myself between two women, one of whom I recognized though for years I had not seen her. When in the old days we had known each other she had been a pretty little fluffy thing with a small part in a *revue*: that had

unaffected, nice child, devoid of all intelligence, and who, if one invited her to supper at a restaurant in Soho, and paid a cab to take her home, would express unstinted gratitude. After I had lost sight of her I read one day in the newspapers that she was to marry a rich man—a man of good family and with a title. And afterwards I heard people say that her husband gave her “everything she asked for.”

But now when she began to talk I saw at once that she had changed. And any allusion to the old days seemed greatly to annoy her. Happening to speak of some people whom we had both known in her choral days, I was met with a face of stone. Then, tucking in her lips, she asked in a miming voice:

“Let me see—who *are* the Blanks? *Are they people one can know?*”

The woman on my other side was older. Yet I soon found her to be but little more intelligent. She belonged to that odd class who would like men to believe that they are “really rather naughty,” “unconventional,” “Bohemian,” and the rest.

“I always say,” she remarked presently, after parroting various platitudes—“I always say that young men *ought* to sow their wild oats!”

She gave a little giggle which meant, “Don’t you think me terribly naughty to say a thing like that?”

How many women, I wonder, make that same silly speech about young men and their “wild oats”? One has heard it a dozen times, twenty times, and always the speakers have been women of the same type. They are women who know nothing, have seen nothing, who talk either for effect, or else are extremely *bête*. Such women smoke cigarettes when they hate smoking cigarettes because they see other women smoking who smoke because they like it.

To forget that woman for the moment, have you ever known a man who sowed wild oats and afterwards stopped sowing them? I have—a few; perhaps ten out of every hundred who acquire the habit of that kind of sowing manage suddenly to pull up and not sow any more (1) when they reach a certain age, (2) when they marry. The remainder often marry, but they go on with the sowing as before, or until they become impotent, when generally they abstain.

satyrs you see at street corners ogling every woman and every flapper who goes past. Sometimes they become worse even than that. Not infrequently they end up in an institution for the debilitated, the degenerate, or the insane.

For is it natural, is it possible to cast aside a vice which has taken firm root—especially such a vice as that? And then what about the women whom such men eventually marry? Are they likely to escape the harvest prepared for them before marriage, or before *and after* marriage, by those oat-sowing husbands, or by even an ex-sower? And if even they escape, what about the second and the third generation?

Consumption, neurasthenia, insanity, aren't those and several other ills often the result of papa's or grandpapa's or even great grandpapa's oat-sowing escapades? Mamma's, grandmamma's and great grandmamma's too, sometimes. If the advocates of oat-sowing would say plainly, "I think all young men ought to take a sporting chance of contracting venereal disease before they marry, and let their wives later on take a chance of contracting it too," we should know where we were. No, the people who advocate and encourage directly or indirectly the deliberate sowing of wild-oats are fools; or worse, criminals. Or else they are mentally unbalanced and so ought to be shut up. This is a digression, but I have seen so much of oat-sowing in the course of my career, and of some of its frightful results, that I feel strongly on the subject. It is difficult to suffer *pukka* fools gladly, but more difficult to suffer at all people who air *banal* views, as my neighbour that night did during dinner.

Fond as I used to be of fox-hunting I have always detested the sight of the kill, and almost as much the practice known as "digging"—a practice almost unknown in Ireland, where until lately were to be found some of the best and keenest sportsmen in the world. I once witnessed an act of callous brutality, the only one I ever witnessed in any hunting-field. A fox had been dug down to, and when he became visible an implement resembling a big corkscrew was twisted into his body and thus he was pulled out. The implement, with two others, one resembling a salmon gaff, the other a triple hook

For various reasons I was unable to protest then and there; but the spectacle had been so revolting and the act so unsportsmanlike that I wrote about it in a newspaper. The article raised a storm of indignation. My statement was discredited by many, I was called a liar and so forth, while the anonymous attacks made upon me by a writer in *The Sportsman* who signed himself "Cosmopolitan" became so offensive that I called to see the editor and showed him letters which at once convinced him of the truth of the statement I had made. "Cosmopolitan's" attacks then ceased. And, as I had meant it to do, the agitation caused the use of those abominable implements to be abandoned.

Back in London, the first acquaintance I met was a most beautiful young man, exquisitely groomed, dressed to the nines—a typical pre-war knut. During our talk he told me he was farming in Canada, and, as that subject interested me, I asked him in which province.

"Oh—ah—well you know—ah," he said, "though I'm farming in Canadah I—ah—don't exactly live in Canadah—no, I don't exactly live thearh—it's such a bally long way off, isn't it?—ha. Fact is, I live hearh in St. James's—I've chambers hearh. Y'see, when my father died a year ago he left me a lot of bally land in Canadah, with umpteen jolly old trees growing all ovah. So I sent a manajar out thearh, who now lives thearh, and when I want any bally money I just cable to the fellah—'Cut down so-and-so many bally trees,' and he sells 'em for what they'll fetch and I get the cheque. A good stunt—what? And all my priceless own ideah."

I had met several types of Englishmen farming in Canada, but this was a new departure. How he would, I thought, have interested my friend in Montreal, Captain Edey!

CHAPTER FOUR

LOOKING about for work again, I heard that Imre Kiralfy, the exhibition promoter and organizer, needed a publicity agent for his Imperial International Exhibition at the White City at Shepherd's Bush. I went to the White City, and after waiting several hours was ushered into his Presence with all the pomp and ceremony one might expect to find if one called to see the Grand Lama of Tibet.

We talked for a while, and then he engaged me at a small salary. I doubt if he ever paid anybody a big salary.

Still, the work promised to be interesting; a satisfactory post, too, because one would be to all intents one's own master.

Kiralfy was a remarkable man, and the amount of work he got through daily was prodigious. Indeed, had Mrs. Kiralfy not been in the habit of dragging him away for his meals he would, I believe, never have eaten anything until literally driven to by hunger. All day and every day, including Sundays, he slaved at the White City. And all day and every day a long queue would be lined up, waiting to see him about one thing or another. He sat all day in the middle of a big, bare room, at a big, bare table, thinking, planning, arranging, organizing. In front of him on the table were rows of electric bell-pushes, and the room had several doors. If anything went amiss and he could not decide whom to blame he would strike a chord on his electric bells and at once doors would fly open and the heads of different departments come hurrying in. Then he would parade them all in front of him, give them a good dressing down collectively, and dismiss them, when they would slink out through the different doors like a lot of whipped dogs.

I believe I am right in saying that Kiralfy himself never lost money over any of his exhibition ventures. One of the most inspiring spectacles I ever witnessed while at the White City was that of Imre Kiralfy marching in to lunch with the Duchess of Argyll on his arm. It recalled to my mind the motto on somebody or another's crest—*Sume superbiam quesitam meritis*. I forget if the band played "He's a Fine Old English Gentleman."

one and all anxious to find news, or, failing to find any, to manufacture some.

This was brought about by enlisting the help of the manager, or head, or director of every show in the "City," of every exhibit, of every stall. I interviewed the scenic railway manager, the mystic caves manager, the wobble-wobble manager, the witching waves manager, the native villa manager, the manager of the big wheel, the manager of the menagerie, the manager of the roundabouts, of the shooting galleries, of the magic whirlpool, the haunted tower, the mystic maze, the five midgets, the stout lady "as large round the muscle of the arm as any ordinary man is round the body," as her flaming posters proclaimed, in short everybody in the "City" who held any sort of administrative position, and I impressed it on them that if at any time any incident should occur in their respective departments which might be of interest to the public, and they would at once notify me, they would benefit.

The effect was electrical. From being a half-dead City, the place sprang suddenly into life. Things began to "happen" there all day and night—not big things, but the sort of little things which the Great Brainy Public loves to read about.

One day, for instance, news would come through by telephone from the wild animals' department that the orang-outang had been delivered of a baby orang-outang—"mother and child both doing well." When the evening papers had safely gone to press—to have let even one evening paper get wind of so thrilling an item of news would have put our publicity wheel out of gear—that news would be sent broadcast to the morning papers, in most of which it would appear next day; for the fact that an orang-outang in captivity has given birth to a baby orang-outang and in the very heart of civilized London is the sort of news item which interests the general public far more than an announcement of the fall of a Cabinet Minister or the report of a speech by the Premier.

Then by ten or eleven in the morning we would be besieged by representatives of the evening papers clamouring for detailed particulars of the birth, and of the parents'

both child and parents. They would be directed to the orang-outang department, where the manager would be ready with the statement that the baby had suddenly died. Well, might they photograph the body, he would at once be asked? The manager would be sorry, but the body had got miled. But they could photograph the parents if they liked.

The representatives would go away grumbling, though also laughing, having seen through the ruse. That orang-outang story had already, however, resulted in the White City's being mentioned in every morning paper. Free advertisement which, at advertisement rates, would have cost many pounds. And the portraits in some of the evening papers of the "parents" of the alleged orang-outang baby would give the Exhibition yet another free fillip.

Kiralfy had arranged, among many other things, for a consignment of Scottish girls to be sent to him from the Highlands to people his model Scottish Village in the White City, and they were to be accompanied by several Scottish pipers in their native tartans.

On the morning they were due to arrive we were notified by telegram that the pipers had gone on strike, and that the girls alone would reach Easton. Kiralfy pawed the air. A Scottish model village without pipers! It was unthinkable. Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark would be nothing to it! But he was never at a loss for long.

"Ring up a Stores," he said, "and see what they can do."

"Have you any Scottish pipers in costume?" I asked when I got through.

"You want the Foreign Department," came the answer.

"I'll put you through."

"Have you any Scottish pipers in costume?" I inquired of the Foreign Department.

"Yes. How many do you want?"

Wonderful! I might have been asking for tea-cups or for lamp shades. You would have thought, by the way the Stores answered, that people went into that Stores every day to engage Scottish pipers in costume.

I said I wanted six. Could they be at Easton

the girls due from Scotland at two o'clock? It was then eleven.
Of course they could be.

And they were.

Before I got into the station I could hear them piping on the platform. And then I saw them.

Splendid fellows! Long, lean, "braw"—very "braw," two of them—with kilts and sporrans and hairy legs complete.

Said I to one of them, who looked as if from childhood he had run wild in mountain glens:

"What part of the Highlands do you hail from, McGregor?"

He didn't say "Hoots, mon." He didn't even say "Aweel." He just laughed and answered:

"The Highlands? Cromer is the nearest I've ever been to Scotland—and my name's not McGregor. It's Aronstein."

Shocked, I said to one of the others—a giant beaver who must, I felt sure this time, be a Highlander *de pur sang*:

"You're from Scotland, anyway."

"Guess not. Guess ma home's in Ohio."

My respect for those Stores which at three hours' notice had conjured up these six magnificent creatures, so perfect in their appointment that Sir Harry Lauder himself would, I feel convinced, have been deceived by any one of them, rose enormously. I had always heard that those Stores could provide anything from an Angora rat to a pink elephant. Now I felt sure they could.

Imre Kiralfy had a text: "Buy the cheapest—*always*." I think he must have had it hung over his bed, for he never forgot it. Consequently when tenders came in, no matter for what, he at once accepted the lowest, regardless of all else. And that being so, it was only in keeping with his invariable rule that when one day we received tenders for waxworks for the Exhibition, without even looking at samples of the waxworks he accepted the lowest tender.

I was walking round the "City" with him soon after it had been opened, when we heard loud laughter coming from one of the galleries. So crowded was that gallery that we could hardly get into it, and, when we did get in, we saw the wax-

Ranged in groups stretching along both sides of the gallery, and made, I think, by a German firm, they "represented," we read, "Scenes from English Country Life."

And then Kiralfy laughed, for he had a great sense of humour. For more horrible people than those waxworks were neither of us had ever seen. The faces were some of them askew—I think the hot weather had affected them—and the clothes they were tricked out in—

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Old British Noblesse were seated at breakfast in a baronial banquetting hall made of cardboard, painted the colour of old oak, the women in silk creations with pearls all over them and their fingers smothered in big bejewelled rings; the men in black frock coats—such coats!—and brown boots and wearing blue ties, or mauve, or bright yellow. Next came a group of the English Aristocracy "To the Hunt Proceeding." The women wore long drop earrings, their great garish eyes had eyelashes an inch long made of horse-tail hair, and all were rouged up like harlots about to "proceed" on a different sort of chase. The men wore pink hunting-coats made by some slop tailor in a street behind the Friedrichstrasse, by the cut of them, boots without tops, gilt spurs, and several had bowler hats, while at least two carried cutting whips as if about to ride a steeplechase.

And so on all along the gallery. Every group we came to was more screechingly grotesque than the last. And Kiralfy was delighted. Had he accepted the highest tender instead of the lowest his waxworks could not have proved a greater "draw" than that absurd travesty did.

I had been a season at the White City when "Tommy" Beecham—now Sir Thomas—asked me to organize the Press publicity for his operas at His Majesty's and at Covent Garden, and later the publicity for his productions at the Aldwych. Almost at the same time the London Theatre of Varieties Company, of which the late Lieut.-Colonel Sir Walter Gibbons, K.B.E., was Chairman, suggested my becoming Press agent for the Palladium, and Forster Bovill, recently at the Court Theatre, having introduced me to Lady Randolph Churchill, she proposed my undertaking the Press publicity for

at Earl's Court, and on the top of that Henri de Rothschild, before he came over from Paris to produce at the Little Theatre his play *La Rampe*, said he would like me to handle his publicity too. One's time, therefore, became fully occupied.

Henri de Rothschild, related to Lord Rothschild, I had met some years before while I was making arrangements at Doncaster for the reception of the hundred or so Press representatives who were about to assemble there to report the first aviation meeting to be held in this country—a flying meeting in opposition took place at Blackpool on the same days. Sir Theodore Cook, then Editor of *The Field*, had introduced me, and though the meeting proved a failure owing to the wind's blowing at over twelve miles an hour, whereas the pioneer aeroplanes in use at that date could not fly in a wind of more than about ten miles an hour, we had an interesting and amusing week, and one made the acquaintance of many well-known people—Harry de Windt and William Le Queux, who were among the judges; Sir Robert Baden-Powell; Graham White; Lord Fitzwilliam; Philip Gibbs, who was there in a journalistic capacity and is now Sir Philip; Hamilton Fyfe, Edgar Wallace, Harry Harper, G. C. Turner, and other distinguished journalists, also there professionally; Colonel Cody, the flying enthusiast, whose efforts the Press for some reason persisted in crabbing—they called him a “swanker,” but being a professional showman it surely was his business to “swank,” though why he wore a pigtail I could never quite make out—and many others whose names escape me. Harnsworth had offered to pay £10,000 to the first person who should fly from London to Manchester non-stop, and the whole of the British Press—excepting, of course, Harnsworth's *Daily Mail*—rocked with ironical laughter. *Punch* in particular waxed exceedingly sarcastic!

The Doncaster Aviation Meeting, which took place on the racecourse, had been promoted by a German-American. The Committee of the Meeting, on finding that flying could not take place, and hearing the thousands of Yorkshiremen who had paid for admission to the course threatening that if their money were not returned to them they would “rush” the

suppose everybody has heard the story of his hailing a taxi while he was walking up Regent Street one warm morning, stripping off his fur coat and tossing it into the taxi with the remark to the driver:

"Taxi—follow me."

Whereupon he continued his prowl, the taxi conveying his fur coat crawling along the kerb beside him. It is almost as well known as the story of Beerholm Tree's waiting twenty minutes outside His Majesty's Theatre for a taxi to take him up to Scott's at the top of the Haymarket.

During the run of *The Golden Land of Fairy Tales* and one or two similar productions of Beecham's I had opportunities of studying stage children, their ways and their peculiarities, and I came to the conclusion that, considered collectively, they are among the happiest and most lovable of little people. At the Aldwych Theatre they were extraordinarily well cared for, as they probably are at other theatres. There were special attendants to look after them; they were provided in the middle of the day with an excellent hot meal; and for several hours daily they attended school at the top of the theatre building, presided over by a County Council school-mistress.

All would have been quite natural, quite charming children but for the ill-advice of, and the silly ideas entertained by, the parents of some of them. I used sometimes to sit down to lunch with them, on the look-out for news copy, of course, and often I stayed in the schoolroom while their lessons were in progress. On one occasion I had begun to flatter myself that some of the children were becoming rather fond of me, when the illusion was rudely dispelled.

"Now go over to that man agayne, Topsy," I overheard one child's mother saying, "and be nice to 'im agayne, and 'e'll put your picture in the pyper and sye more nice things abaht you—go on, there's a dearie!"

So that was why the wretched brats pretended that they liked me!

One day I suggested to the school-mistress that she should make her little pupils write an essay on "What I hope to be when I grow up." It had occurred to me that some of the essays might prove to be amusing enough for publication, and

if so, such publication would of course give the theatre news-publicity.

There were thirty children in all, twenty-nine little girls and one tiny boy. The tiny boy was, in his essay, distinctly practical. He "hoped to keep a shop like father." Nearly all the little girls' ambition was to "Look like Lily Elsie," go round the world, and this astonished me. "Make enough money to make mother and father happier." Not one of the essays had been "inspired," nor had the children any suspicion that their essays might be published. Yet what they wrote showed that out of those thirty poor children not one was really selfish.

Lady Randolph Churchill, whom I had interviewed for a newspaper some years before becoming her Press agent, possessed all the gifts of the gods—exceptional beauty; exceptional intelligence; exceptional wit; exceptional health; exceptional charm of manner; exceptional personality. Her one eccentricity—if it can be called eccentricity—was the indignation she would betray whenever any newspaper spoke disparagingly of Winston. Even some of the cartoons intended to make him look ridiculous annoyed her exceedingly. I believe she never forgave Owen Seaman for reproducing in *Punch* a certain cartoon of her son.

The Shakespeare's England Exhibition was financed largely by Sir Ernest Cassel. Lady Randolph was in high feather when after dining with him she told me that he had agreed to do what she asked. And yet, I remember thinking, the man who could resist Lady Randolph's persuasiveness when she really wanted something and was determined to get it would of necessity have been a creature devoid of human feeling.

In the offices of Shakespeare's England, in Whitehall, meetings of the committee and of its sub-committees took place almost daily—they began early in the morning and continued in rotation until late in the afternoon, when tea would be served in little silver cups, Lady Randolph presiding. At almost all those meetings Lady Randolph was in the chair, and round the table would be gathered such men as Sir Edwin Lutyens; Sir Luke Fildes, who designed Drake's ship, *Revenge*, for the Exhibition; Cox, the banker; and six or eight more encreable gentlemen—of great or small distinction—and then

would talk and talk, while Lady Randolph patiently listened and listened. Then when they had finished making all sorts of suggestions and done all their talking without arriving at any decision about anything, Lady Randolph would tap on the table with the butt of her gold pencil-case, rise to her feet, and, looking down at her committee with amused tolerance, say with a dazzling smile:

"Gentlemen, we are going to . . ." do so-and-so.

She was much too polite, of course, ever to say a word which might have led them to suspect that their talk could with advantage have been dispensed with and much time saved thereby.

The people one met at the Palladium were different in every way from the Beecham crowd or from Lady Randolph's *entourage*. Chris. Marner was manager, and he must remember as well as I do the trials and the tribulations by which the Palladium was beset before it began to achieve its now enormous popularity as a place of entertainment. Charles Gulliver, Chairman of the London Theatre of Varieties, Ltd., and probably now a millionaire, had at one time been earning a small salary as a clerk in a lawyer's office; to-day he controls, I believe, twenty or more music-halls and has interests in all sorts of successful entertainment enterprises. He was always a "white man," and just, and everybody liked him and liked working for him: the amount of work he himself got through was stupendous—I believe he worked even harder than Kiralfy.

It was at the Palladium that I became acquainted with the wonderful "Chinese" illusionist, Chung Ling Soo, who travelled always with two interpreters, though in fact he was a Welshman who spoke English perfectly—he was afterwards accidentally shot dead on the stage. I spent many pleasant Sunday evenings with him at his house at Barnes, and he loved to recount his strange experiences the world over and to narrate endless stories about his personal friend but professional rival, that weird, enigmatical, utterly curious creature, half genius, who called himself professionally The Great Lafayette.

"I'll introduce you to Lafayette one day, if you like," he

him: you may detest him from the outset. He's not 'ordinary' at all, and his brain—there's something wrong with it, something radically wrong, as you'll soon find out if you meet him several times. He hates all human beings, but worships dumb animals. I think I'm about the only man who gets on with him at all."

Painted on the outside of Lafayette's house in Tavistock Square was an enormous portrait of the big dog that lived with him and was his constant companion by day and by night. Inside the front door of one house he had was a staircase which, by means of a hand lever, could be made to revolve either way. The first trick he played me—he was like a child in his fondness for practical joking—when I had come to know him pretty well, was to get me on that staircase and keep me on a treadmill; if I tried to walk upstairs he set the staircase revolving downward; if I tried to walk downstairs he set it revolving upward. And he had other equally silly gadgets in that curious house of his—not the one in Tavistock Square.

People who are slightly unbalanced mentally always appeal to me, because, being abnormal, they generally have original and quaint views, and do queer things. Consequently I got on rather well with Lafayette, and he took to inviting me to lunch with him. One day, however, he went a little too far.

"Have a cigar," he said, when we had finished lunch. He held out his case to me and I took one. But I wouldn't smoke it then, I said. I would enjoy it presently in the train on my way down to Yorkshire.

Travelling first-class on a free pass, I found myself seated opposite the only other occupant of the compartment, a fresh-faced, grey-haired, benevolent-looking old gentleman, who later entered into conversation. We got on so well together that presently, producing my case, I asked if I could offer him a cigar—it was the one Lafayette had given me.

"That is very kind of you," he said, "most kind," and he beamed with benevolence. "You've only that one left though. Am I not depriving you?"

He lit it with the care of a connoisseur in cigars. Then suddenly the thing exploded with quite a loud bang.

The old gentleman sprang to his feet. I saw the veins in his forehead swelling as if they were going to burst. And then he told me what he thought of me. "Who the——?" What the——?" "How dared I——?" and so on. He was very angry indeed.

When at last I had succeeded in calming him a little and inducing him to listen to my explanation and to accept my apology, his attitude began to change. It changed entirely when I told him more about Lafayette, about his amazing genius, his eccentricities, and so on. Finally he laughed outright.

"And so instead of Lafayette's trick being played on you," he exclaimed, "you, quite innocently, played his trick on me! Ha, ha, that's very funny—very funny indeed! I must tell my wife all about this when I get home to-night."

As for Lafayette, I have rarely seen a man so overjoyed as he became when I told him what had happened. I have said he was like a schoolboy.

He was strangely superstitious. When his big dog died he was more broken-hearted than I had ever thought any human being could be. It was buried in a handsome coffin lined with velvet, and the funeral cost sixty pounds.

"My luck has gone with him—gone for ever," he said to me, alluding to the dead dog. "I shall never do anything more, and I'll soon follow him: you'll see I'll soon follow him, the dear old fellow, the best friend I ever had. You'll see I'll soon follow him," he went on repeating.

And I did see.

I was in the sub-editors' room in a newspaper office soon afterwards, when the tape ticked out news of a big fire in a theatre in Edinburgh, and loss of life. Followed a little later the report that The Great Lafayette was among the victims.

We laughed.

"Lafayette at his tricks again," somebody said. "He'd risk his life to get an extra screed about himself published," for it was a standing joke that Lafayette was the biggest self-advertiser of the many self-advertisers in the entertainment world.

But later messages proved that he actually had been burnt

back into it to try to save his favourite horse, which generally appeared in his performances, and so lost his life. Yet even after his death he maintained his reputation as a practical joker, for the first body to be buried, believed to be his, turned out to be that of his assistant. Poor Lafayette! I have sometimes wondered who his parents were, what manner of man and woman can have produced so *bizarre* and abnormal yet withal so extraordinarily clever an offspring.

"Lafayette brought about his death himself," Chung Ling Soo said to me when we were talking over the tragedy. "He often told me he meant one day to short-circuit his wire to start a big fire which would give him a big newspaper boost."

Then I remembered the sub-editor's words: "He'd risk his life to get an extra screed about himself published." And Lafayette's prophetic words came back to me too: "... the dear old fellow, the best friend I ever had: you'll see I'll soon follow him."

CHAPTER SIX

WHEN Henri de Rothschild came from Paris to produce his play, *La Rampe*, some of us met him at Victoria, and he came towards us smiling and hat in hand, accompanied by Frank Otter and by four Parisian ladies, one more beautiful than another. The ladies were members of his company. I introduced Gervase Elwes to him—Gervase Elwes of whom I never heard anyone say an unkind word and who was a shining example of what a man ought to be.

"You will all dine with me at the Carlton—yes," Henri de Rothschild said in French, when we had talked for a few minutes at Victoria Station, and he was about to drive away. We replied that we should be *charms*.

After dinner we all went to a theatre with him and at his expense, about twelve of us, including his ladies, and then he took us to the Savoy for supper. After supper he said:

Again naturally we were *charmés*.

And after *déjeuner* at the Ritz he again invited us to dine with him at some restaurant, and then to have supper with him, and then again to have *déjeuner* with him, and so it went on during the whole time he stayed in London—two or three meals a day with him—everybody who had anything at all to do with his play—until at last I felt that if his hospitality continued I should be rendered unfit for work.

La Rampe was not a great success, but he didn't much mind; the production of plays was with him a recreation—merely a hobby.

During the months I had worked for the White City Exhibition, Shakespeare's England Exhibition, for the Palladium and for Beecham, I had become friendly with scores of newspaper representatives, and had collected their cards. Being thus in direct touch with most of the London newspapers, and with some of the big provincial papers, and having discovered that apart from artists and others—who being so to speak their own commercial commodity need to advertise themselves, just as a pill-maker or a soap-maker needs to advertise his pills or his soap—there appeared to be many people in London who out of vanity or through a craving for notoriety were ready to pay for publicity, I opened an office in Regent House for the purpose of supplying their needs and then advertised for clients. At the same time I arranged with the Ladies' Social Bureau in Bond Street, then managed by a Mrs. or Miss Klitz, and with similar organizations, that they should mention my publicity agency in confidence to any persons whom they might suspect of being anxious to get themselves written about in the newspapers.

The venture proved interesting as well as remunerative. All sorts of people, their curiosity aroused by the advertisements of the Newspaper Publicity Organization, came wandering in. Among the first was an Australian who wanted to sell an airship. He proposed a commission of £200 if I could dispose of it for him, and suggested that possibly Horatio Bottomley might like to buy it. Why? Oh, to sail it over London and then over the whole of the British Isles with an

I called to see Elias, who was associated with *John Bull*, at Odhams's, in Long Acre, who said that before considering possible purchase he would want all particulars about the airship—its history, how much petrol it would consume, what it would cost to run, or rather fly, cost of upkeep, what the pilot's wages would be, and so on. Upon my making these and other inquiries I found that the airship belonged to an Australian crank, that it was quite old, that its fabric was perished, that its engines were out of date, and that I was no less than the twelfth sub-agent to whom it was proposed to pay a commission of £200 or more if the airship were got rid of! So nothing happened.

Then a man came in, a gentleman by the way he spoke, who said he was Major Blank. On looking him up in books of reference I found that he had at one time been an officer in the regular army.

"Now I would have you to understand," he said, "that I am *not* a matrimonial agent, most certainly *not*, nothing of the sort. But I happen to know a great many people in Society, among them young baronets and viscounts and others who are broke to the wide and would like to—er—to marry well. Now you, I understand, also know a good many people and you have, I believe, been a good deal in America. Therefore, probably among your American acquaintances are rich girls who have social aspirations, and so would be glad to marry sons of our impoverished British aristocrats. I have already brought about through my own efforts several—er—unions of the sort, and earned certain fees by so doing—substantial fees I mean—five hundred, a thousand, two thousand, sums like that.

"The way I proceed is as follows: I tell you all this in confidence. We will say that I know a poor baronet and that you know a rich girl. I introduce you to my poor baronet, you present me to your rich girl. Then when we have all known one another for some weeks, I give a little dinner party at the Carlton or somewhere, and invite you all. After dinner we go on perhaps to a theatre, and after the theatre to supper, and then to some dance or other—not to any low place, of course. Our young people see a good deal of each other after that—I end to that part—and the

to become engaged and eventually to marry, the bridegroom in due course hands me the sum I agreed he should pay me in the event of his marrying the rich girl. So what I am going to propose to you now is that you and I put our heads together to bring about more of these happy—er—unions, and then we are equally the—er—fecs."

But the proposition did not appeal to me.

One morning quite a pretty girl came in, not more than twenty and obviously a lady. She appeared to be rather nervous, but when I had offered her a chair and we had talked for a few minutes she began to be more at her ease.

"I have seen your advertisements," she said, "and the matter I have come to consult you about is rather delicate—rather peculiar: of course you will respect my confidence.

"To be quite frank, I am engaged to be married to a rich man who has a title, and because I am very poor his people think he is making a bad match, an 'atrocious match' they call it. You see, they know nothing whatever about me, and so they, perhaps naturally, conclude that I am some little nonentity he has picked up somewhere and who has, as they would say, 'set her cap at him.'

"But it is nothing of the sort, I assure you. I am really in love with him, I would marry him if he had nothing, and far from being a 'little nonentity,' I belong to a very good family, although we are desperately poor," and she went on to tell me a lot about her ancestors, some of whom had figured prominently in history at different periods within the last three hundred years.

"So what I want you to do is this," she went on, all trace of nervousness now gone. "I want you, if you can, to get my picture put in the papers, and paragraphs saying who my people are, who my ancestors were and what they did—nothing and everything of that sort. I want you to do that so that my future husband's relations may read about me and so come to know that I am not a nonentity, although I am poor." She added that she could afford to pay only a small fee.

Somehow she appealed to me, and her case interested me, so

of England the truth of what she had told me, I set to work.

Soon her portrait appeared in several journals, also paragraphs about her and about her forbears, about their prowess, what they had done in the "good old days," etc. Then she came in again.

"You are doing splendidly!" she exclaimed. "My future husband's people have already thawed quite a lot! Keep it up, do. A little more of that sort of stuff and they'll condescend to speak to me!"

She invited me to the wedding, introduced me to her husband as "an old friend," and later played the game by inducing him to put work in my way which more than compensated for the small fee she had paid me for the boosting. To-day her husband is a very well-known man, and he has not, I am sure, the slightest suspicion of the little stunt his clever wife engineered to break down his family's "frills."

Yes, the more one sees of human nature, the more interesting does the study of human nature become. Almost the only people who really bore me are what are called "our leading actresses." What *poseuses* many of them are, how artificial in their manner, even in their mode of speech, for ever talking for effect or to "impress" those about them. What makes them do it? Actresses on the lower rungs don't go on like that, and even chorus girls are generally simple and unaffected—at least those I have met, but of course there are exceptions among our leading actresses.

The late Cecil Raleigh had a keen sense of humour. In particular during rehearsals of his Drury Lane dramas he used to be amusing. He could, too, get up at a moment's notice and deliver a clever and witty speech on almost any conceivable subject. In the old days at Drury Lane, when overrated Augustus Harris could never conduct a rehearsal without using most objectionable language, often Raleigh would cross swords with him on the subject. Yet that obscene language at rehearsals can quite well be dispensed with was proved by the success which later attended Arthur Collins. Did anyone ever hear Collins fling coarse language at his chorus? Indeed, if a producer were to-day to "bloody" his chorus girls I believe the whole lot would go out on strike.

During a rehearsal of one of his sporting dramas at Drury Lane, in which a big cover shoot takes place, Cecil Raleigh let his lip curl more and more downward, a sure sign that something was amiss.

"That is all very nice and very pretty, gentlemen," he said when the scene was over. "But did not one of you notice that after the sportsmen have been blazing away at things up in the air, and up in the air only, out come all the beaters carrying bundles of rabbits—rabbits and nothing else? I was always under the impression that rabbits ran along the ground. And you over there—you lady in the gauze creation out of the Rue de la Paix—don't you think that after your long tramp through undergrowth and brambles with that frock on you'd be about stark naked? Do, for goodness sake, some of you, use a little common sense!"

So the beaters emerged during the final dress rehearsal, each with a brace of pheasants.

"Bring me those birds," Raleigh called out. "Yes, I thought so," as he examined them, "newly-shot pheasants, pheasants just picked up, and each with a label round its neck addressed to Cecil Raleigh, Esq., Drury Lane Theatre—one brace, four-and-six, pay on delivery!"

"If I'd not noticed those labels," he said to me afterwards, "it's odds on those supers would have left them on for the performance—and how should I have looked when the critics waxed sarcastic?"

I always felt a sort of personal affection for Cecil Raleigh because, years before I was born, his father, Fothergill Rowland, a consulting physician in Monmouthshire, had saved my mother's life in the hunting-field.

So many recollections come crowding back, so many people rise up in one's mind, that it is hard to make selections. Through belonging to Boodle's I was able to obtain newspaper interviews with many "big" people who, had I written from a private address, would probably have ignored my application without a personal introduction—such was the snobbery which obtained in those days: to a large extent it obtains still.

Thus, through writing from Boodle's I was able to interview—

of that sort; I had met Lady Sybil Grant while with Walter Smythe in Shropshire, and even then her poems showed quite exceptional merit. While at Ugbrooke Park, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh's Devonshire seat, I was able to gather a column of original and amusing observations from Mrs. Elinor Glyn.

When specializing in interviewing, the chief difficulty lay in inducing really important people whose views carried weight to express those opinions for publication—no journalist ever succeeded in interviewing Kitchener or Pierpoint Morgan, for instance.

Often people of real importance would receive one with the utmost courtesy, and, until experience taught me otherwise, I used to think that a friendly reception meant that all the information wanted would be forthcoming. Not a bit of it. Some of those celebrities were crafty beyond belief. They would talk quite pleasantly, answer all one's questions, and yet when one began to write one would become aware that though they had talked a great deal and seemed to answer questions they had, in reality, not made definite statements or expressed any views at all.

Sometimes a nonentity would receive one in the rudest way.

"Oh, I've no time to waste talking to damned newspapers," strutting about his room. "You journalists are a curse; this interviewing business ought to be put a stop to," and so on and so forth.

So, rising as if to leave, one would say:

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you when you are so busy. Some other day perhaps you will find it more convenient. My editor told me if you were busy on no account to disturb you—"

At once the nonentity would change his tone.

"Oh, well, as you're here I may as well, I suppose, say something to you. You can sit down again, only don't keep me long. Now, what is it you want to know?"

And then he would talk for perhaps half an hour, or an hour, and all the time it was easy to see that he revelled in being interviewed, that his feigned annoyance and his pretended dislike to being approached by a "damned newspaper" had been mere bluff. I have known

the whole interview article themselves! Thus do some men "swank."

I made it a rule always to dress well when about to call to interview anybody of importance, for the simple reason that in England footmen and most other servants usually form their opinion of a stranger on the way he is "turned out." If he is shabbily or even carelessly dressed they at once conclude that he must be an "undesirable"—in America, except sometimes in New York City, a man is not "sized up" by his clothes. One day G. R. Sims said to me when we happened to be talking about this:

"My boy, never go to interview anybody of importance unless you have on a hat made by a reputable firm—Scott, Lincoln and Bennett, Barnard or White of Jermyn Street, somebody like that."

I asked him why.

"Why, my boy? Because directly the footman takes your hat he instinctively glances inside it. If he sees that you buy your hats from Tom, Dick or Harry, he at once puts you down as being 'no class'—to his narrow way of thinking if you don't buy your hats in the West End you cannot be a gentleman, so on his own initiative he will, if he can, prevent your seeing his master."

Authors, considered collectively, I have generally found to be disappointing people. You read their books, and look forward to meeting them, and when you meet them they are not in the least what you expected them to be. Men whose writings make you laugh are not infrequently the dullest of dogs in conversation. And conversely, many a good talker and amusing *raconteur* writes the stupidest of letters. I once attended an authors' dinner professionally, having been asked by an editor to write an amusing description of it—the week before I had written a descriptive account of a music-hall artist cricket match which appeared to have tickled that editor's sense of humour.

I shall never forget that dinner. One of our leading humorists sat throughout the meal in almost complete silence; I don't think he smiled once. I sat between two brilliant authors, men of literary distinction—one of them talked of

nothing but different ways of cooking food, the other nothing but sparking plugs and carburetters and magneto and back-axes. A third one whom I tackled could talk only of short-horns.

So instead of trying to achieve the impossible by writing "humorously" about a dinner of that description, I wrote an article under the heading, "Should not Authors Hide Themselves?" In it I argued that the more the majority of authors kept themselves to themselves the better, owing to their being so disappointing and disillusioning when brought into the light of day and made to mix with their less gifted fellow-creatures. The editor, thinking to add point to the article, surrounded it with portraits of a lot of well-known authors, all of whom, of course, concluding that what was said in the article must be meant to apply to them, became very indignant and wrote me some nasty letters.

Peffer Dando, the bulldog breeder and photographer of wild animals, who had to do with theatres and music-halls and music-hall people all his life, one day gave me a lot of first-hand information regarding the methods some dog-trainers employ to teach dogs to perform tricks on the stage, and, in addition, put me in the way of seeing that training done. As a result, I was enabled myself to witness some of the cruel practices adopted by, at any rate, one trainer, so when the question of stage dogs' performances was brought up in the House I was called on to give evidence before a Select Committee. Of course the evidence created indignation amongst performing-dog trainers, as well as amongst others who derive pecuniary benefit from the exhibitions. Even a man who was then Editor of *The Tatler* was very much annoyed, and when I met him afterwards he declared that the evidence given during the sitting of that Select Committee in proof of cruelty to performing dogs had been false. No doubt he believed it had been, though I can't see why disinterested persons should wish to give false evidence. However, the agitation resulted in the introduction of regulations which had long been needed. Still more are needed.

A lot of twaddle was talked before the war about Bohemia and Bohemianism, and some of the Bohemians themselves

talked a good deal of rubbish. Plenty of the "high intellectuals" [sic] of Soho and Chelsea at that period had as much actual knowledge of life as a hedgehog. And their fine scorn of all that was clean and healthy! Outrageous dandyism may be silly, but of the two it is preferable to the cult of dirty fingernails and general slovenliness which many of those Bohemian coteries affected. Why a man must necessarily be unintelligent because he can wear a clean collar without feeling self-conscious, and a woman empty-headed because she dresses becomingly, takes care of her complexion and does her hair nicely, I have never been able to make out. The war greatly changed the mental attitude of most of London's Bohemia. The World War has changed it still more—what's left of it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

To hark back a long way—came the fateful 4th of August, 1914. I managed to wangle a commission, and remained a "temporary gent." until two years after the war had ended. But all that is ancient history. I am not going to say much about any war, for by now the word stinks. "See that old barnshoot?" I overheard one of the Young People say the other day. "Just think—he remembers the last war!" Yes, it has come to that. One is now merely an onlooker. A museum piece.

But all but the Young People remember the stunning effect of the declaration of war in 1914 and the nightmare days which followed. All in a moment the world stood still—in one sense leapt into feverish activity in another. Suddenly nothing mattered save one thing—THE WAR. Gone were petty interest-pot ambitions, talk of the happenings of yesterday and to-day in face of the appalling cataclysm of to-morrow.

How astounding that yesterday folk had read with interest that Mrs. Somebody-or-Other had looked charming whilst walking in the Row conversing with Lord Tom Noddy; that an orang-outang in captivity had reproduced its species; that a crow with a white feather in its tail had been seen on the

steps of Brompton Oratory; that Plum Warner had scored a hundred at Lord's; that grouse were likely to be plentiful; that some man's wife had run away with somebody else's husband.

Interest in all things in life had become atrophied, paralysed, save interest in that one monstrous Thing. Yet already people talked of "the War being over by Christmas." I could remember the outbreak of the Boer War, that "miners' war" as Joseph Chamberlain called it—though Heaven knows what good the miners ever got out of it!—and the same being said then: "a punitive exhibition; it will be over by Christmas." I didn't believe it. I couldn't. I had seen something of Germany and the Germans. I had felt, very slightly, the country's pulse whilst in Germany, and could remember the German students' talk about "when the day comes when we fight you," no longer "if the day comes when we fight you." And in imagination one saw the hundreds and thousands of men at that moment alive and well, and full of ambition and of patriotism and of determination, who, in a few months' time, perhaps within a week or two, would be lying dead.

Before the war the society of soldiers had rather wearied me—excellent fellows, hospitable, friendly, gentlemen, all that sort of thing, but all so like one another as regarded the things which interested them and the things they had to talk about. Hunting, polo, racing, shooting, cricket, theatres, those about summed up their topics of conversation. Interesting subjects, of course, but there are so many other subjects which also are of interest.

In the new army, the army of "temporaries," all was different. Men of almost every conceivable calling and trade and profession and avocation had joined up before the end of 1914 and were still pouring in. One met horse-breeders from the Argentine; mining engineers from the Cape; outpost riders from Canada and from West Africa; men of leisure who had been world wanderers; big-game hunters; explorers; ranchers and cow-punchers; tea-planters from India and Ceylon; rubber growers from the Malay States; frontiersmen and men of the mounted police from Alberta; owners and trainers of thoroughbreds; amateur and professional 'cross-country riders; in addition to the milder home-products like City financiers.

stock-brokers, merchants, lawyers, authors, actors, journalists, schoolmasters, painters—we had in the Corps a Royal Academician who later was deputed to paint effigies of the Kaiser on sacks for bayonet practice; shopkeepers; an ex-butler; a barber from Douglas's in Bond Street who before the war had shaved me became my brother officer; men of every class and every rank and every walk in life. Never before can so miscellaneous an assortment of men of every description have been gathered together and pushed on to the same social plane. And the "other ranks" were much the same. At one time I had as batman a registered "financier" who sometimes hinted to me that if ever I or any of my brother officers should be "temporarily embarrassed. . . ."

One day I said to him, "What would you do if I borrowed a hundred pounds from you, then placed you under arrest and refused to repay the loan?"

Without turning a hair he replied, "I should wait until after the war, sir, then sue you in the Civil Courts. . . ."

We were tremendously impressed when the first order came from the War Office for one of our officers to go oversea. We looked on him as a Hero. The mess gave him a farewell champagne dinner; there were speeches and "He's a Jolly Good Fellow" with a "tiger" at the end; the band played "Auld Lang Syne" and "The Roast Beef of Old England" and other patriotic airs, and next morning I think all the relatives he had in the world arrived in taxi-cabs to wish him God-speed.

Finally amid much cheering he went off like the hero of Melville melodrama leaving the Lyceum theatre to go out an fight for home and do or die. He was covered with swords and revolvers and haversacks and field-glasses and prismatic compasses and electric torches and water-bottles and filters, and his tunic pockets bulged with field dressings and tubes of iodoform and bottles of Eastern Syrup to buck him up when he got shot at. We took it for granted that we had seen the last of him in this life, that he was to all intents already dead and screwed down in his coffin.

Curiously enough, when I went to France some time afterwards, our Hero was one of the first men I met there. Stationed at a Base, he lived in a magnificent *apartment facing*

a beautiful park, and on one side of him was the best restaurant in the town, on the other an excellent picture house. He told me he was O. C. G. (Officer in Charge of Goats)—goats were the food of some of the native troops—had been since he came out. And O. C. G. he remained, and in that luxurious "billet," until the end of the war. He could think and talk of nothing but goats when I met him—I believe he dreamed of goats all night. But even to-day if you say "Goats" to him it produces the same effect as the shout, "Beaver!" used to have on a bearded man.

"Donne-les à tes camarades, mon p'tit."

I was under the awning of the Cafe Victor at a French base, sampling an *apéritif*, and I looked up. A pretty, painted girl put a handful of little gilt medallions on the table, beside my glass, and I saw inscribed on each: "Madame Stéphanie," with an address in the town.

An old waiter standing by, grinned.

"C'est la vie, c'est l'amour—et puis c'est la guerre!" he murmured.

"Aussi elles sont toutes bien gentilles," added the painted girl, giving me one of "those looks." Then she passed on.

What a fortune Stéphanie must have amassed during the war! And what stories she could tell!

A quaint incident at another Base comes back to me. I met a temporary subaltern who told me he had just landed and was looking for billets. I said I was staying in a rather disreputable little hostelry—it could hardly be called an hotel—where one met "all sorts."

"All sorts, that's just what I want," he exclaimed. "Lead me to it."

I saw he was something of a character, what used to be called a Knut, and he had been in the hostelry only a few days when by mischance his C.O. happened to saunter in, to find him not on duty, as he ought to have been, but seated on a bed between two quite appetizing bits of French fluff, laughing and joking while consuming a potent concoction called *Grog Américain*, which consists largely of rum. His C.O., a mere boy, gave him one quick look, then ordered him to report at

I happened to be present when the Knut reported, and what occurred I have not forgotten.

"Now look here, sir," said the Knut quite coolly before his C.O. had time to speak, "of course, I know quite well why you have told me to report here, but I think that before you say anything we ought to understand each other clearly. I don't know what age you are — about twenty-four, I should imagine, and all my life I have been my own master and accustomed to a style of living of which you are probably ignorant. I am related to many of the British nobility, and my father is an intimate friend of His Majesty King George. Now, if you are so ill-advised as to make things unpleasant for me owing to that little bedroom incident, when you barged in so inopportunately, I shall at once write to my father, who will speak to His Majesty, and the next *contretemps* will consist in your being ticked off by the King. So what about it?"

I waited aghast. I expected to see the Knut at once put under arrest, if not in irons, or something drastic of that sort. To my amazement the young C.O. capitulated. The threat that he might actually be "ticked off by His Majesty King George" had been more than he could stomach.

"All right," he replied quite meekly, "I think I understand — but please don't let it occur again while you are on duty. You may go." (Prisoner discharged.)

"I put that over rather neatly—what?" the Knut said to me afterwards. "My father has been dead twelve years."

"Did your father know the King?" I hazarded, almost staggered at his effrontery.

"Oh yeah, my father sure knew 'His Majesty King George,'" he laughed. "They were brought up in the same bath. Knew the King? I *don't* think! But I knew I could put one over that Pipsqueak."

Another incident in that hostelry was not devoid of humour. Happening to come in rather late one night, I found that my "whatnot" had not been emptied; it was full to the brim and there was no place into which to empty it. *Que faire?* Suddenly I remembered that the natives of that town—also of other French towns—usually flung their slops out of their windows into the street. I went on an upper floor. Carefully balancing

the "whatnot," I stretched my arm far out of the window, gave a jerk—

Off came the handle and down went the "whatnot" to crash through a glass roof under which some N.C.O.s were playing cards. Up came a roar as of wild animals let loose. Noiselessly I closed the window, locked the door, switched off the light and jumped into bed.

Next morning I came upon several N.C.O.s discussing the affair. One of them came up to me.

"One of them blasted strumpets flung her jerry out of her window last night, sir," he exclaimed. "Could you lodge a complaint with the manager, sir? We were playing jackpot at the time."

"Playing what?" I asked.

"Jackpot, sir."

"I'll remember that name," I said, "and see the manager at once. There's really no holding these women. . . ."

What struck most of us forcibly when we landed in France during the war was the contrast in the "atmosphere" of the towns to their peace-time "atmosphere." Everybody, the women in particular, seemed to be so sad; yet they did not look worried or depressed.

One woman in Amiens, hugging her son good-bye as he was leaving her to return to the front, told me that she had already lost seven sons. That one was the last she had left—*mon bébé*. Nevertheless she showed no sign of breaking down from grief. On the contrary, she was calm and resigned, proud to think of her sons having died for France, she said, and if it should be the will of *le bon Dieu* that her *bébé* be killed too—well, what would you? God knew best. A fine spirit, showing courage as well as fortitude. It existed in France amongst Frenchwomen of every class.

Another thing which struck me as I motored about was the intelligence of the French children. They were all so bright and quick of understanding. A boy of ten or twelve asked if he could tell me the shortest route to some town perhaps twenty miles distant would describe the road in detail without a moment's hesitation. I couldn't help contrasting those children with many of the country yokels in the West of Eng-

land who, if you ask them the way to any place not close to their homes, stare at you open-mouthed and round-eyed and finally reply:

"Dunno. Never heard tell on un."

Six in the morning. A filmy, blue-grey haze hanging motionless over the illimitable expanse of parched and sun-cracked pasture land. Birds singing in the few trees. Women working in the fields. A tuneless bell summoning the villagers to Mass, and away over the hill those horrible guns roaring as they had roared all night, with rattle of bursting shrapnel and occasional terrific explosions which made the air vibrate and re-vibrate. And all the while, creeping slowly towards Puchevillers Casualty Clearing Station in a cloud of dust along the white, winding road from as far as sight could stretch away into the horizon, came an endless grey snake marked from head to tail with red crosses at close and closer intervals.

It was the second day of the great onslaught on the apparently impregnable Thiépval on the Thiépval Plateau, and that grey snake marked with red crosses dwindling in the distance was the convoy of wounded and mangled men which for four-and-twenty hours had been crawling into Puchevillers from the shambles field over the hill where men became casualties like the ticking of a clock. Every hospital tent had long been over-crowded, and the wounded lay in rows on the brown grass in the already sultry morning air, rows which every minute increased in length as the head of the great snake halted and alert orderlies slid the stretchers with their bloody burdens out of the Ford ambulances, swiftly but with extreme care, and deposited them beside the hundreds which already lay ranged there.

And the M.O.'s! Were ever such workers in the cause of humanity? Fourteen of them, their shirt-sleeves rolled back, worked day and night, not stopping to eat, hardly stopping to snatch an hour or two's sleep when nature could hold out no longer—cutting, slicing, deftly bandaging, speaking only to give an order or to ask for something wanted. They worked for no reward. They sought neither gratitude nor thanks. The thought of possible honours in the days to come you may be quite sure did not occur to one of them—fortunately, for dis-

appointment might have followed. Were many—or any—of our M.O.'s honoured for the magnificent work they did in the dressing stations, the casualty clearing stations and the hospitals?

The madness of war, its insensate folly, its crass stupidity. That and other thoughts of the kind crowded into one's brain as one looked on, trying not to think at all, for if you think at such times life becomes unbearable. None who went through the war, save those who stayed at the Bases, ever speaks of what he saw. Most of what we did see we all want to forget. To quote from Herbert Asquith's "The Fallen Subaltern":

One last salute: The bayonets clash and glisten;
With arms reversed we go without a sound:
One more has joined the men who lie and listen
To us who march upon their burial ground.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOME officers bathing one day in a shell-hole came upon a field-boot sticking out of the earth under the water. There was something in it, so they got a fatigue party and dug down. They found the body of a French officer who had been killed and buried presumably by the shell which had made the crater. For some reason, perhaps owing to the nature of the soil, which was a heavy clay, the body had not decomposed but had dried up. In the cigarette-case in the tunic pocket were cards with his home address. When the fatigue party had buried him and careful note had been made of the exact spot, a letter giving particulars was sent to the address on the cards, and with it the contents of the dead officer's pockets.

The letter which his parents wrote in reply showed that they were overwhelmed with gratitude for the trifling act of kindness. Should the officer be in Paris at any time he must, they wrote, on no account fail to come and see them—they lived close to Versailles—and make their house his home for as long as ever he liked.

On another occasion a corporal reported that a man in camp had just been badly wounded by a fragment of shrapnel and appeared to be dying. The man had asked if he might see an officer, he said.

An officer went to him at once. The man had clearly only a short while to live, and knew it. He asked if he might be allowed to dictate a letter to his parents and if the officer would see that they received it. The letter was written, and in less than half an hour the poor fellow was dead.

With the dead man's letter the officer sent a letter telling the parents how well their son had done his duty, and so on, and sent also all the man's little belongings. Again came a letter expressing the deepest gratitude. Would the officer, when next in London, come and see them? They would so appreciate the honour—"the honour"!—if it would not be giving him too much trouble. They lived in Shoreditch.

Months passed before the officer found himself in town, and then, after telling them to expect him, he went down to Shoreditch. The man he found to be a carpenter in a good way of business. He and his wife were dressed in their best clothes, and the gratitude they expressed for the officer's small act of humanity in going to see them to tell them about their son's last moments was pathetic. To show hospitality and additional gratitude the good carpenter had provided a bottle of whisky which he tried hard to make his visitor consume on the premises at a single sitting!

That boy killed in camp had been their last son. They had lost two earlier in the war.

Until the first war came along I had not the slightest conception that men and women of the class from which our soldiers were then mostly recruited possessed such a strong sense of gratitude and had such fine feelings. But times out of number incidents occurred which proved this to be so. That war taught us a lot in more ways than one. The affection, too, of the men for their wives and children which was shown in their letters home I think astonished most of us. And I am sure I speak the truth when I say the officers one and all detested being compelled to read the men's letters, or rather to censor them, but it had to be done. Of course, censoring letters was not quite the same

thing as reading them, because with a little practice we acquired the knack of skimming the pages in a way which enabled us to satisfy ourselves that they contained nothing needing obliteration, while what was actually said was scarcely noticed. That sounds paradoxical, but is none the less the truth, as officers who censored letters will testify.

Sometimes I wondered if the men appreciated the pains the great majority of officers were at to reduce, so far as this could be done under adverse conditions, the discomforts of the campaign, or whether they looked upon as "softies" officers who took special pains in that respect. They never said anything, of course, or betrayed their feelings; to have done so would have been contrary to the traditions of the army, and they knew it. I think, however, that on the whole they did appreciate what the officers did or tried to do for them. And in some cases the officers took sporting risks when out of consideration for the well-being of their men they exceeded their duties or acted contrary to regulations.

I cannot recall many instances of lives being deliberately thrown away, but I do remember one or two. One in particular made a deep impression. A Canadian subaltern laughing and joking with friends in a trench offered to bet five francs that he would expose himself on the parapet for a given number of seconds and return uninjured. Stupidly enough the bet was taken, and the lad jumped up. There he stood, a target for any enemy sniper, and snipers were known to be watching. No shot was fired at him, however, and he clambered down again and with a laugh pocketed his five francs.

"And to show you I didn't do it to get your bloody five francs," he exclaimed, "I'll do it again for nothing."

The others tried to prevent him, but he got up on to the parapet again and a moment later was shot dead.

Fear. As a psychological study, fear is extremely interesting. The more one saw of it, or of what is called "fear," and the more one thought about it, the more complex it seemed to become. For what is fear? I believe it has never been accurately defined, for nobody can define accurately that which he cannot fathom and therefore does not understand. Where does fear begin and where does it end? The opinion I formed during

that war was that not one man in fifty was what is called a coward, and that the great majority of men whom one saw apparently paralysed by fear were not cowards at all. They were unwilling victims of an emotion which swept over them, unbalancing their sense of proportion, overpowering and deadening their will.

Have you ever made a speech in public, acted before a large audience, played in an important cricket match, ridden a race or done anything of that sort when the eyes of the multitude were upon you? If so have you not on occasions, unless you are exceptionally constituted mentally, experienced in advance a feeling of restrained nervous excitement which made your limbs quiver and your fingers twitch, and your heart beat faster and sometimes your mouth turn dry? And yet you were not "afraid." On the contrary, directly you began to speak or became active that disagreeable sensation completely disappeared and you became your normal self again.

Now, when men in cold blood suddenly find themselves under fire, all those symptoms occur, but in a much higher degree. So strong is the hold the feeling takes that often it makes them lose all self-control; and if while deprived of self-control those men have the misfortune to commit some act which on the surface would appear to have denoted cowardice. . . .

Indeed, I go so far as to say that in that war men were shot for cowardice who were not cowards at all, but had acted against their better judgment whilst overmastered by the overwhelming sense of nervous excitement. In happier circumstances, or had they gone into action, they would in all probability have shown no sign of cowardice, for the more highly-strung a man is—as events which occurred proved—the less likely is he to lose presence of mind in moments of acute crisis.

Even in everyday life this fact is often exemplified. A street accident occurs—a man is knocked down by an omnibus. Or in a steeplechase a horse falls at a fence and his rider is stretched senseless. Who are the people who at once become wildly excited, rush to the scene of the disaster and either lose

nothing? Not men and women of the highly-strung and imaginative type; not the better educated who have learned to exercise self-control and initiative; but what we call "the crowd," the people of slow understanding, the for the most part dull and stolid. The intelligent and highly-strung and naturally emotional at once grasp the situation, hold themselves in check, render what help they can. When they cannot be of use they don't crowd round and stare. They get out of the way lest they should unwittingly hinder the helpers.

I have seen men trembling in every limb and with their teeth chattering before they went into action who were the bravest of the brave. And I have seen men after a bayonet charge looking so wild and mad-eyed that you might have mistaken them for maniacs escaped from an asylum.

I remember a sentry who as I came up to him remained seated on a bank, staring at me dully. Reproved for remaining seated and not saluting he made no sign, nor did he move. He turned out to be in the condition known as abject terror. He was petrified with what is commonly called "funk."

Funk! I sent him into hospital, and only a few months later he distinguished himself by performing a splendid act of gallantry. No, the human animal is only rarely a coward.

Strange what kinks some religious folk have. I said to a man once who had just become a father—I knew his wife to be delicate:

"I hope your wife didn't have a bad time? Did she have an anæsthetic, or twilight sleep?"

He looked quite shocked.

"My dear fellow," he answered, "I shouldn't think of allowing my wife to be given anything of that sort. I consider that the Almighty sends women these pains at childbirth and that consequently they ought to bear them."

And while in the Acheson Red Cross Hospital in Regent's Park we were visited one Sunday by an old *padre* who told us that our wounds were the result of our sins and that "the worst wounded were probably the biggest sinners."

Of course we laughed, those of us who could: some poor fellows were too far gone to laugh—the biggest sinners of all.

of humour! I wonder if Lawson Johnson, who was in my ward, recollects that incident?

That *padre* naturally was not an army chaplain. Everybody knows what fine fellows most of the army chaplains were.

In spite of the war's horrors there was incidental comic relief, mostly unintentional. At a sergeants' sing-song one night a Canadian Tommy, who in civil life was one of the Dominion's most famous professional vocalists, happened to be present. I had heard him at a sing-song the year before, on which occasion he had been announced somewhat as follows:

"Mr. Blank, the very famous Canadian baritone, whom probably most of you know by repute, while possibly some of you may already have had the privilege of hearing him sing, is here to-night. He has been asked to sing us one song, and has most kindly consented"—loud cheers and much clapping of hands and enthusiastic stamping of feet.

That was the way he had been announced in England. We were now in France. After a red-nosed man had sung some music-hall "comic," rather a hang-dog-looking sergeant came on to the platform and shouted out in a raucous voice:

"I've got a Canadian 'ere 'oo wants to sing. I think you'll find 'im all right. I've 'eard 'im!"

The baritone, waiting in the wings, of course "eard" the sergeant's announcement. It sent him into such convulsions of laughter that probably he would not have been able to sing at all that night had the sergeant not come up and asked him "what the 'ell 'e was a larfin' at?"

It was rather wonderful, when you come to think of it, that so few of the "temporaries"—"other ranks" as well as officers—were court-martialled, because thousands must have found it extraordinarily difficult to restrain their tempers and their tongues when forced to "suffer fools," which they did anything but "gladly."

Also some of the young temporary lieutenants—lads who before the war had probably held very subordinate posts in civil life—got so above themselves at Actually Holding A Commission In His Majesty's Army that they became almost unbearable. I remember hearing one such pup slanging a

that the man groomed his horses very well, so one day I said to him:

"What were you in civil life, my lad?"

"I was head groom in a racing stable for the last two and twenty years, sir," he answered.

Another youth of the same type had been for six months a Second Lieutenant in the Guards—and never did he let us forget it! "When I was in the Guards . . ."; "Of course in the Guards we . . ."; "My dear fellow, if you had been in the Guards . . ."

One day whilst inspecting a detachment of Labour Corps—men all over forty and looking about fifty, who had joined up to do their bit and who did it uncommonly well—he came to a man who had a tunic-button sewn on upside down.

"Have you a coat-of-arms, my man?" I heard him ask.

The man stared. What the devil did the officer mean? What the hell was a coat of—what had he called the thing?

"Did you hear what I said? *Have you a coat-of-arms?*?"

Not knowing what to answer, the man thought it safer to reply—"No, sir."

"Well, if you had a coat-of-arms, would you like it to be worn upside down?"

The "No, sir," had come off all right the first time, so he risked it again: "No, sir."

"Well then, please to remember that His Majesty the King does not like to have *his* coat-of-arms worn upside down! Take his name, Sergeant-Major."

That was the species of ass who so annoyed the men. Luckily the species was not plentiful. By now it is probably extinct.

CHAPTER NINE

It was said during the war that the general intermingling of the classes, caused through men of all ranks and professions joining up as "common" soldiers, would put an end for all time to class distinctions. It made most of us see life from a wider standpoint, consider life from different angles, and so become more tolerant as well as broader-minded. But it did not destroy class distinctions, for nothing ever will destroy them. Snobbery amongst all classes is as rampant to-day as ever it was. The nobleman is still toadied by the sycophant. The enormous rich man is still spoken of by some with bated breath. Mr Snooks, who reads assiduously in her newspaper about the doings of Fashionable London Society, would still greatly like to be on even bowing terms with some of those Fine Folk as she calls them, and be exceedingly vexed if she thought you believed she lived in the suburbs when in reality she "resides on the outskirts of London." And I suppose that even you and I, though firmly convinced of our freedom from snobbery whatever other failings we may plead guilty to, would in our hearts be more impressed by an invitation to dine with the Marquis of Stoat at Battleaxe Towers than if the invitation came from plain Mr. Jones, or Brown or Smith, of Bermondsey.

There will always be men of outstanding ability (or intelligence) or with an exceptional capacity for hard work (also some men of exceptional cunning), who will succeed in accumulating large fortunes and so eventually become "upper classes," if not "aristocracy," for money does much more than talk. Later some of these people will probably be offered important civilian appointments, company directorships . . . Let their financial star continue to scintillate, and, who knows, there may come the magic mirage of a Title in the not wholly dim future! And so it goes on from strength to strength and has been going on in this country through countless ages. Abolish "upper classes," "class distinctions," snobbery and the laughable "invert" snobbery of London's lower Bohemia, where if you chance to mention someone with a title you will

people like that . . ."—so utterly childish and silly. Abolish? Never in your lifetime or mine.

During the eighteen months immediately preceding my demobilization I was deputed to find employment for ex-officers seeking work. I then soon discovered that posts could be obtained for them in one way only, namely, by systematically applying to and persistently worrying one's friends and acquaintances. And being blessed with (and subsequently cursed by!) a comparatively large circle of acquaintances, my efforts were not wholly unsuccessful.

The task of securing work for others was, however, tremendously difficult, in spite of my making it a rule to recommend only ex-officers whom I knew to be efficient, willing, and in other respects what I hear men call "the goods"; in short, men likely to suit. Men who came along saying they would "do anything" I black-listed at once. No man is of any use who says he will "do anything," and no potential employer would, I knew, entertain the thought of engaging a man who said he could or would. Yet even to-day men in need of work sometimes advertise in the newspapers—"do anything." Do they ever get replies? An employer's first question when you want to place a man with him invariably is—"What can he do?" Reply that he can "do anything" or is "willing to accept anything" and you instantly kill his chance of getting any work.

My advice to ex-officers who are seeking employment and have no capital to invest has always been—Make out a complete list of your friends and acquaintances, women as well as men (relatives are rarely of use), whom you think may be able to introduce you to someone able to give you work. Then apply to each in turn for an introduction.

Few people will refuse to try to help an ex-officer to get employment provided their doing so does not cost them one farthing or put them to the slightest personal inconvenience, and the man who gives an ex-officer an introduction which may be of use has a self-satisfied feeling afterwards of having performed a generous and philanthropic act. Men who followed my advice found that in many instances the first introduction led to another, which perhaps led to another, and so

of course, a most laborious proceeding, but it proved in the end to have been worth their while. Another thing to be remembered is that a single personal interview, if by hook or by crook it can be obtained, is likely to prove more advantageous than any amount of correspondence. And next in merit to a personal interview is a conversation by telephone. A great deal about a man's personality and his fitness for a job can be gathered from the timbre of his voice, the way he expresses himself, and the speed at which he talks. Time was when commercial men were prejudiced against a "high-brow" voice, as they called it—in other words, a voice which betrayed culture and refinement. Now that is not so. Men who have been educated at public schools and universities are in demand in business houses provided they possess the essential qualifications.

And finally, let me say with emphasis to ex-officers with a little capital and who seek employment—*Don't* entrust your capital, or any fraction of it, to some stranger, or even to a friend, in the belief that he will quickly increase it for you. Why should he be better able to increase it than you yourself are, provided you are prepared to work and set about in the right way to get work? Keep your capital under your own control—all of it—always. Use your own judgment—or your lawyer's—in preference to anybody else's when investing it. And, if you have capital enough, don't seek a salaried post. Start in business on your own account; avoid taking a partner or going into partnership with another; *never pay a premium to anybody who undertakes to pay you a salary in return*; or invest in an commercial concern which would bribe you with the promise of a salary. For the salary you will get will be your own money repaid, and if you get all of it back you will be lucky.

People say sometimes—"If you had your life to live over again, what would you do?"

Probably most of us, though we don't think so, would do the same as we have done. Because we forget that the experience we have gained during our lives we should not have gained then. Before the war the army was a good profession for a man

the hours that officers can spare to loaf in are comparatively few: there is so much to be learnt now in the army. And it cannot be shirked. The knowledge must be acquired even by officers to whom satisfactory or unsatisfactory confidential reports are a matter of indifference. Apart from that, the army with its existing rates of pay is a satisfactory profession for a married man with a private income and for the bachelor without a private income but with intelligence enough not to waste half his pay on bridge and the other half on whiskies and sodas. But in every case a man to qualify to-day as an officer must be socially presentable—some of our temporary officers were not, through no fault of their own. Also he must possess above all else tact and *savoir faire*, which, though they resemble each other, are not identical. Before the 1914-1918 war the fact of a man's being in the army—I am talking now of officers—gave him a social *cachet*. It may do so still, but not to the same extent. So many of us served in the army and therefore know all about it and are alive to its shortcomings as well as to its worth that familiarity may have bred contempt.

In regard to the other professions—we will call them the learned professions—from what I have seen I should say that the man who has to earn a livelihood but has not private means would do well to turn his attention in preference to business or to commerce. There still exist old-fashioned folk who consider it to be degrading for what they call “a gentleman” to have to do with commerce, but they are dying out. For if you will grant that a man's success in the world is to-day measured by the great public not by the good he does for mankind, not by any scientific discovery he may make, not by any literary or other artistic distinction he may achieve, but solely by the amount of money he is able to amass, then the professions stand very far back. Look at the many highly educated men you meet about, men trained in public schools and at universities, who are able to eke out only a bare livelihood. And look at the men who have probably not read twenty books in their lives and whose education has been more or less of the cigarette-card variety who are piling up fortunes.

women who have no money and no friend who will supply them with money enough to relieve them of the necessity of being forced to support themselves until success has come to them, are the artistic professions—literature, painting, music, acting. Twenty-five years ago, even fifteen or twelve years ago, it was possible for a singer or an instrumentalist, who in addition to possessing the necessary gifts had plenty of determination and perseverance, a sound constitution, and would work hard, to earn a competence on the concert platform. To-day it is almost impossible.

No man can succeed to-day in the musical profession—and what I say of men applies equally to women—unless he has money enough to support himself, money enough to pay for years of training, money enough to give at least four or six recitals in one of London's principal concert halls—over most of not all of which he will lose money—money enough to advertise himself in the newspapers and on the hoardings, money enough to employ a first-rate Press agent to boost him and so keep his name constantly before the public. And of course, over and above all that he must be an exceptionally finished singer with an exceptionally fine organ, or an exceptionally talented performer if he happens to be an instrumentalist, and he must be endowed with personality.

How I wish people living in the country, and in provincial towns of small importance, could be made to realize the crime they commit when they encourage some friend or relative who as an amateur sings or plays quite nicely, to come to London and become a professional artist. What scores of young musical aspirants I have seen arrive here full of hope and ambition, thirsting for Fame, certain in their own minds—because their wretched friends and relatives had dinned it into them that they were geniuses—that in a few months, or at the most a year or two, their fame would have spread throughout the land.

And what happened? What happens in almost every case? The aspirant engages a concert hall, generally through the medium of a concert agent, pays for the printing and bill-posting, for the newspaper advertising, for the rent of the hall, for the hire of ushers, and all the rest, at a total outlay of

between eighty and a hundred pounds which has somehow or other been scraped together.

The great day comes. The only tickets sold have been bought by the aspirant's friends and relatives. Complimentary tickets have been distributed broadcast, however, so that the hall is probably about three parts full. Next day a few reports of the recital, written by *biased* music critics, appear in some of the London papers. These criticisms may be good, or they may be bad. It makes not a bit of difference so far as that aspirant's "future" is concerned, for that "future" will never come. That one recital, indeed, almost always ends that aspirant's "musical career." Disillusionment has come too late to save the money wasted on the recital, but fortunately not too late to stave off a life which would have been spent in repining.

And the foregoing remarks apply up to a point to the other artistic professions. Except the stage. In my capacity of Press agent to various theatres I saw even more of disappointment and disillusionment amongst what are called stage aspirants. Hardly a week went by without somebody or another writing, or calling to see me, to ask if I could "get them a shop"—when they used that phrase I knew they had already been employed on the stage. Mostly they were girls, generally quite young, whom the glamour of the footlights attracted. Unlike the concert givers, however, they usually had friends and relatives who had opposed their becoming actresses and tried to prevent their doing so. Consequently they had cut adrift from those sensible friends and relatives, and they all thought, felt convinced that given the chance they would in a short time rival people like Violet Vanbrugh, Gladys Cooper, Teddie Gerrard, or whoever happened to be their most admired actress at the moment. Also, unlike the concert givers, they had visions not of fame only, but of big fortunes, too, in the near future.

That is a mistake too often made by most people with ambition. They read or are told that this or that man or woman who is at the summit of his or her profession—it may be an actor or an actress, a painter, a literary man or woman, a concert artist, even a jockey—is earning so and so many thousands a year; ordinarily the figure named is greatly in

excess of the true figure. But they forget that for every individual at the top of the tree there are hundreds, thousands, right down at the roots and living often in poverty.

And what happens nine times out of ten in the case of the stage-struck girl who has conjured up a painted paradise in her vivid imagination is that she gets a "shop" in a company going on tour, "on the road" it is called in stage jargon, and that she continues on tour—if so fortunate as to continue getting "shops" of that sort—month after month, year after year, often at a starvation wage, without ever seeing London or even a Number One provincial city, until a day arrives when she receives notice from the manager that her services are no longer needed.

But suppose that the unexpected should happen—that she should at the outset obtain an engagement in a London theatre, and in something better than a chorus, and that she should rise in her profession. How long, without plenty of money to help her, will it take her to rise to the top, in other words to succeed solely on her merits? A few years ago an actress who to-day very famous was earning thirty shillings a week. And her great future might not have come yet had it not been for her husband's exceptional business acumen and his ability as a producer.

Sir Seymour Hicks wasted twenty years of his life playing the fool in musical comedy. To-day he is admitted to be a fine serious actor. Robert Hale began his "stage" career sixteen as a nigger minstrel on the beach at Hastings. Then he joined a circus. Then he played the rôle of hind legs in pantomime elephant at Manchester, and, having made in that part was presumably "promoted" to play the front legs. For years he remained in the provinces. He could not get to London. A stroke of luck brought him to London eventually, and by the time he was middle-aged he had become a firmly established comedian.

Even well-known and distinguished actors and actresses often find themselves "resting" month after month, sometimes for a year or two in succession, for one reason or another. And so I would say with regard to the stage too—if you have great talent and great ambition, and a good constitution and an

immense capacity for hard work, and a really thick skin, *and enough money to live on*, by all means join "the" profession. Failing those attributes—don't.

CHAPTER TEN

WHAT about the rolling stone "profession"? Again, unless you have money, there is nothing in it. Far better become a stock jobber, or apprenticed to some commercial organization, or an insurance agent if you have a persuasive tongue, or a country estate agent's representative, or a schoolmaster if you are able to impart knowledge, or else learn to specialize in one of the more modern industries, such as wireless. A year or two spent as a reporter on a London daily newspaper or an important provincial paper I have always maintained to be an excellent training for any boy endowed with the necessary qualifications and a sound constitution. For the work shows him all sides of life stripped of shams and hypocrisies; it gives him the right perspective; it gives him self-confidence and develops his initiative; it knocks the rough corners off him; it broadens his mind and so increases his tolerance for human frailties. Its disadvantage is that it may tend to make him restless and therefore militate against his afterwards adapting himself to a life of routine. Also it tends to develop his sense of humour—always a dangerous thing! Ian MacLaren used to say that any young man cursed with a sense of humour ought to do all in his power to conceal it until success had come to him! With that I don't agree.

"A man who would succeed must above all things avoid uttering platitudes and truisms," the editor of an important London journal said to me the other day; we were discussing Members of Parliament and their whimsicalities. And he went on: "Whenever I get letters from readers of my paper marked 'for favour of insertion,' which talk about 'your valuable journal,' or such things as 'the historic walls of old Drury,' or

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call Paris 'Parce,' or the West of England the 'West Countree,' or the Atlantic ocean 'the herring-pond,' or say 'like Oliver Twist he asked for more,' or 'like *Punch's* advice to those about to marry—Don't,' or make use of any similar words or phrases or quotations which have been said and printed over and over and over again, I at once throw those letters into the waste-paper basket. Why? Because I maintain that a man whose thoughts and intelligence and imagination can be so circumscribed as to preclude his rising to any higher plane of originality, cannot have statements to make or views to express which it would be worth our readers' while to listen to."

But then editors of London newspapers can afford to be cynical at the expense of their less gifted brethren.

All who are not biased, or confirmed misogynists, will admit, I think, that the women of to-day are, class for class, in most respects on a higher plane mentally than their mothers were at their age. Owing largely to the greater freedom and candour of the newspaper Press and to the spread of newspaper-reading amongst women, owing also to the independence to which women attained during the wars, the modern girl is more intelligent, she takes a broader view of life, she is less intolerant of the shortcomings of others than ever her parents were. For those reasons, too, she is less ignorant of Nature's mysteries and of Life's problems, and far better able, therefore, to take care of herself. Whether the girls of to-day are as a whole more attractive physically than those of two or three decades ago may be a matter of individual opinion. My own view is that certainly they are. Without a doubt they possess considerably more personality, the natural outcome of enhanced intelligence, and personality leads to facial expression, which adds so much to beauty and charm. In addition, in place of clinging to modes of dressing which resulted from the Victorian puritanical mentality, they now dress rationally.

It is said that there are more wives to-day who for one reason or another keep their husbands at arm's length. If that is so, then such women ask for trouble and generally end by getting it. For frigidity of one or other of the "contracting parties," as the lawyers say, is the true cause of marriage infidelity in many cases—if not in most.

True, during the past year or more certain newspaper writers and others, a few of them women, have carried on a vitriolic campaign of insult and abuse regarding modern young women, aiming their poisoned shafts in particular at the girl in her mid-teens. But the young women thus vilified, not excepting the girl in her mid-teens, have treated all such attacks with contempt by paying not the slightest attention to the spiteful things said and written about them, mildly amused and possibly rather flattered at being considered to be objects of so much interest and worthy of so much comment.

And our young men. I lately came across a book entitled *Rude Letters to Youth*, by Bill Back-Bench, M.P. - whoever he may be. It was published in 1937. Think of the initiative, determination and amazing heroism displayed by our young men since 1939, then listen to what Bill Back-Bench has to say:

"We have, as a nation, gone to seed, and the sooner we pull ourselves together the better for us. We used to lead the world in physical prowess, and now find our physique comparing unfavourably with that of many other nations. . . . Although we have become adepts at inventing excuses, these facts have got to be faced. The Dictators are challenging Democracy all along the line. . . . It is truly said that any attempt to force a uniform physical discipline on the young men of our country would be contrary to national genius [whatever that may mean], but is it not also true to say that our present flabbiness is equally out of keeping with it?

"Make no mistake about it, the brutal truth is that to-day our British youth on the whole compare unfavourably with the youth of most of our neighbours in both bodily fitness and mental outlook. . . . The fact remains, however, that our neighbours bring up their young men and maidens on entirely different lines, and the comparison, in this year of 1937, between their youth and ours makes a wandering Englishman feel hot under the collar. . . . It is open to grave question whether we have not become, in some ways, dangerously soft."

Did you ever read such bosh? The same sort of tripe was talked after the Boer war, and after the war of 1914-1918. But I doubt if it will ever be said again. Bill must feel thankful that he wrote under a pseudonym.



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